This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600059649$

MIGNONETTE.

A SKETCH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE CURATE OF HOLY CROSS.

"Then in life's goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness,
Nor prize the coloured waters less,
For in thy darkness and distress
New light and strength they give.
And he who has not learnt to know
How false its sparkling bubbles show,
How bitter are the drops of woe
With which its brim may overflow,
He has not learn'd to live."—LONGFELLOW.

VOL. II.

London:
JOHN HENRY AND JAMES PARKER,
377, STRAND.
1858.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORNMARKET, OXFORD.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

Page

THE CARNATION 1

CHAPTER II.

HOPE DEFERRED 19

CHAPTER III.

FRUIT RIPENING 34

CHAPTER IV.

WIDOWHOOD 49

CHAPTER V.

FRUIT WITHERED 67

CHAPTER VI.

CONFIDENCES 82

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOST LILY 97

CHAPTER VIII.

PARTINGS 113

CHAPTER IX.

Page

THE MIRROR TO THE HEART 128

CHAPTER X.

THE CARNATION PLUCKED 142

CHAPTER XI.

FLED 157

CHAPTER XII.

A RAY OF LIGHT 175

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE WORLD 193

CHAPTER XIV.

WALL-FLOWER 207

CHAPTER XV.

THE VILLAGE WHERE THE BLUE-BELLS GROW . 222

CHAPTER XVI.

LOOKING UPWARDS 237

CHAPTER XVII.

HOMEWARDS 255

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LAST LOOK AT OLD FACES 264

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VISION OF THE MAY MOON 279

CHAPTER I.

THE CARNATION.

Thou hast call'd me thine angel in moments of bliss,
And thine angel I'll be 'mid the horrors of this,
Thro' the furnace unshrinking thy steps to pursue,
And shield thee and save thee or perish there too.—MOORE.

ABOUT this time the social circle at Lamford received addition in the shape of two visitors, with whom we may as well make acquaintance during the ten days or more that Herbert is lying ill at Bickerton.

Of these visitors, the first was that Arthur Deane of whom we heard something at the Lamford ball, and who has now come down on more extended leave to pass a few months with his family at Natchetts: the second, Mr. Edward Wordsworth, of whom we have heard so much in connection with the succession to the estate of Bickerton Firs. Of the first of these two characters, little need be said to occupy our time. He was outwardly a piece of eccentricity, and probably beneath it concealed a natural shallowness of

intellect and absence of capacity. His quaintness was mistaken by some for talent, and by others for silliness, whereas it neither represented the one nor the other entirely, though it might have been the result of a mixture of both qualities. It is not unlikely that it was originally a piece of acting, which, having gained the actor a reputation for drollery, he had carried out till it became a habit. There is no doubt, that in the ordinary dealings of life he displayed none of that sagacity for which his advocates gave him credit; his long-continued friendship for Edward Wordsworth, for example, who led him into every unfortunate step which clogged the wheels of his existence, and they were not few. In spite of these, he revered and clung to his friend with that tenacity which only meaner capacities have for stronger, under circumstances which should teach even them to know better.

Of Edward Wordsworth's character, enough has already been given to our readers in the conversations recorded in these pages, to relieve us from detaining them long either on that score. That he might have been a respectable member of society there is little doubt, and that he had considerably gone down the hill instead can equally be affirmed. All his good points, and there were some, evidenced the former, and probably all his bad ones were only the result of the latter. Let us speak charitably. He was an unlucky young fellow, who wanted guidance, but who was always so situated as to be guiding others to their cost, and in whom recklessness and folly were more conspicuous than profligacy and vice. The pity of it was, that in the eyes of those who saw and be-

wailed the former, the time seemed coming when by degrees they would have to witness the latter, to which in this life gradual recklessness and gradual uncorrected folly invariably lead.

Arthur Deane and Edward Wordsworth had been schoolfellows, and in the days when the latter shewed to the best, he had been continually invited to spend the holydays at Natchetts with his friend. There never was any difficulty, for old Wordsworth, as we have seen, had prostituted the great gifts which God had made him in the persons of his children, and cared little, comparatively speaking, for their presence, as long as he had those around him whom he had taken from the world. Hence it was that Edward became the playfellow of Arthur and Nora, then the college companion of the brother, and the supposed pretender to the hand of the sister. The former position had not altered when Arthur went into the army, but the latter had been certainly qualified by Edward's own indiscretions: for some time had elapsed since he had been asked to Natchetts, and the Colonel had shewn himself in no way desirous to encourage any further intimacy than that which was confined to the young men themselves.

Nevertheless, he was fond and proud of his son; with a father's partiality he recognised his good points as excellencies, and saw no bad or shallow ones at all. He considered his sticking to his friend in adversity as a sign of noble disinterestedness of character, whereas it was the evidence of mere weakness: and though he would much rather have heard that Edward was located at Newmarket or Boulogne for the sum-

mer, he could not complain of his son's wishing him to pass that season with him, seeing how lately he had been disappointed in every hope of fortune in the very neighbourhood.

On the subject of Bickerton itself, the Colonel's feelings were not so completely on the same side as formerly. He, with the rest, had thought the Admiral's will an injustice, and, as not the most complimentary reports respecting Herbert's character had been spread during the first gust of virtuous indignation at his good fortune, he was still more disposed to fall in with the clamour raised at the cruel treatment Edward Wordsworth had sustained. But as time sped on, and Herbert Capel first made his appearance and then his footing good in Lamford, it was impossible for any thinking man in the place not to draw a contrast between the line he struck out for himself, and the opinions he soon gained, with those which the disinherited aspirant would have exhibited in like case. Colonel Deane was at first inclined to sneer at Herbert. His family saw their cue, and sneered also to the utmost. In a couple of months the Colonel saw that he was making a fool of himself, and therefore rated his family for their partizanship; and in another month he was one of Herbert's particular champions, and would, had circumstances so permitted, have been only too glad of an arrangement which made him Herbert's father-in-law.

Not that we for a moment think that the Colonel, who was a proud county gentleman, would, under ordinary circumstances, have thought of such a thing in connection with his daughter for one moment; but

the subject was forced upon his attention, both by the tongues of his neighbours in reference to the unsuccessful aspirant for Bickerton, and by the imprudent contempt with which his daughter treated the successful inheritor. It was thus that he was driven both to contrast the merits of Edward Wordsworth with those of Herbert Capel, and to allow that he had not been playing the most prudent part during the last ten years in allowing the intimacy in his family which had sprung up from the unrestrained intercourse between it and the former. No harm had come of this, to be sure; at present, at least, he had no reason to suppose so; and in reference to Herbert, he had taken means to remedy any exhibition of disinclination to be well with him, which, as we have seen, both Mrs. Deane and her daughter evinced on his early acquaintance with society at Lamford. All, then, that we mean to say on this point is, that the Colonel, when Lamford tongues were wont to make remarks on the good understanding which existed between his daughter and her old playfellow, would cast a wistful look at the waving woods of Bickerton, which his library windows commanded, and think that it would not be so bad a thing, after all, to see her there now, though they did not own for master the person to whom expectation had always assigned them.

With these feelings it is not to be wondered at, if the gallant lord of Natchetts was somewhat startled at the exhibition of his son's hospitality displayed in a letter, informing him "that poor Ned Wordsworth was dreadfully cut up at the beastly injustice done him at Bickerton," and that therefore he, Arthur,

had asked him "to come and spend the summer with him at Natchetts." The Colonel, we say, was startled. Into the question of delicacy, on the part of Mr. Wordsworth in coming at all, he, of course, did not care to enter; but somehow, without having followed out the workings of his own mind, he had arrived at some conclusions respecting him for which he was himself hardly prepared. This often happens with us all. We find ourselves thinking on many a subject, diametrically differently to what we had done but a short time ago, and until we question our feelings closely, do not perceive how the process was brought about. Certainly, the Colonel did not see any harm in the young man's coming to visit him, and was just as willing to receive him with cordiality as before; but now he would rather have not had him; and vague ideas, unfounded, perhaps, about Nora, crowded on his imagination. However, there was no help for it. It never entered his head to oppose his son's wishes, and therefore come the visitor must. Respecting his daughter, however, he was uneasy, and it struck him that a few words to her, cautioning her on the behaviour she should assume towards her old playfellow, might set all his uneasiness at rest, besides awakening her to a sense of the folly of espousing Edward's cause so openly in public as she had been inclined hitherto to do. Miss Leonora Deane, or, as she was commonly called, Nora Deane, we have already seen, was a champion of the young gentleman in question; but there is no reason to suppose that, at all events, before Admiral Ayscough's death she entertained any warmer feeling for

him. As we have heard herself say, there was nothing between them; and when she made this announcement to Madam d'Aulaincourt, no doubt she was speaking the truth. But my readers will see, with half an eye, that her position was a dangerous one; she had every feeling in his favour which predilection could give. He was her old play-fellow; and this, combined with a tendency to excuse his follies, and a sense of indignation for injustice, or fancied injustice, done to him,—together make up quite foundation enough to fall in love upon; and the worst of it was, that with it all, Nora had an imperious will of her own,—easily, perhaps, guided, but which would not bear thwarting. She was a noble girl, indeed, full of impulse and of hatred of wrong; but she joined with it sympathy for a scamp, and that tendency to indulge his follies which we see so often in kind, tender-hearted women. So the Colonel sent for her one morning.

"Nora, my love, I want to speak a word to you; will you sit down and listen?"

Nora affectionately kissed the old gentleman, and sat down beside him.

"You know that Arthur brings Edward Wordsworth with him."

"Yes; is it not wrong of Edward to come?—Such bad taste, under the circumstances."

"Well, I don't know," replied the Colonel, who had not thought of the subject in that light; "I don't see why he should not come if he likes, at least on that account."

"I am sure, Papa, I should not like to have come, if I had been he."

"Perhaps not," replied her father, who wanted to get at the important part of the subject without delay; "Perhaps not. What I wanted to speak to you upon was not so much about his conduct as our own."

"Ours, Papa?"

"Yes, dear, ours; that is, in some sort ours. You know, my dear, that there are foolish busybodies in our town of Lamford here, as well as elsewhere, and we are no more safe from their tongues than our neighbours. In short, I may say, foolish things have already got into circulation about this young man's connection with—Lam—Natchetts."

"Oh! Papa, I should have thought that we were above noticing such nonsense," said the young lady, whose face had been becoming gradually crimson during her father's speech. "Really, Papa, Natchetts requires—"

"You must let me finish, my dear child," said the Colonel, "or you will quite misapprehend me. The things that have been said, though I have called them foolish, as I hope they are in fact, are nevertheless natural. Young Mr. Wordsworth has been with us from boyhood, his cause has been defended by us, he is now even coming on a visit to us. It is natural that people should speak as they do: it is for us to shew them that they are wrong."

"And how, Papa?" asked Nora, indignantly. "By shewing ourselves inconsistent? by sacrificing our friendship for the injured to an intimacy with a *parvenu?* I don't see that; and it is unlike yourself, Papa, at the same time, to say so."

"You are so hasty, Nora, that I have no hope of making myself understood as long as you break in

in this strain," said the old gentleman. "I have told you that we can shew the people here that they are wrong, but I said not a word about sacrificing friendships. I mean that we can shew them that that which they say is to be, is not to be; and if I had meant that sacrificing the friendship you allude to was the only means to attain to that end, I should have taken the proper step at once, by making your brother withdraw his invitation. But I did not. I think our being well with Edward quite consistent with my giving advice to my daughter when I think proper."

The gallant Colonel was getting heated: Nora was silent. The former continued, after a moment's pause—

"You must remember, Nora, my child, that I had occasion more than once, about Christmas, to represent to your mother and to yourself that your partizanship about Bickerton, though most noble and disinterested, was sometimes carried to exaggeration. The results of this conduct on your mother's side are of comparatively small importance; but with you it is different. You are young, full of impulse, and do what you feel and think. Young people, Nora, from small beginnings of this sort, are apt to think the cause of the slandered one their own. I do not believe this in your case: you are too good a daughter to think of setting your affections anywhere without a thought of your father's wishes: but I have asked you to listen to me now that you may be induced to watch yourself. You will be thrown with this young man a good deal, if he comes here: be therefore on your guard, Nora, and by your conduct shew these Lamford people that they are wrong."

Why was it that a pang of pain, undefined indeed, but certain, shot through Nora's heart? Had the Colonel, in attempting to paint to her and warn her against what might be, been actually painting what had already been? Alas! it is just these warnings which, coming too late, so often tell us of the mischief done. Nora, though at first with feelings of no more than predilection for and sympathy with Edward Wordsworth, had actually talked herself, during the last six months, into love for him. She had defended him so long and so enthusiastically, that his cause had become her own. It was not he only that had lost Bickerton; it was herself as well. Partly indignant with herself for the discovery, partly with her father for making it for her, she for some minutes made no reply. Then, feeling that his eyes were upon her, and fearful lest he should interpret too well her burning cheek and downcast eye, she hastened to speak: but she had no words at once ready. Evil influences immediately furnished them, and for want of time to think, deceit was the result.

"Have I ever behaved to Edward in such a way, Papa, that you should doubt me?" she said.

"I never hinted a doubt of you: I only desire to warn you."

"What has he done, then, that you should doubt him?"

"I do not doubt him even. If I did, he would not come here."

"His loss of fortune has brought him low, indeed," said Nora, not heeding his reply.

"It is wrong of you to say so," said the Colonel, getting angry. "What I have said to you to-day, I should

have said equally if he had succeeded to fortune and to rank. I speak because he never can be your husband, or my son-in-law. If he were at Bickerton, and had five more estates like it, I would say the same. I would sooner see a daughter of mine in her grave than the wife of such a one as he."

There is no need to tell our readers that Colonel Deane had made a very great mistake. If his daughter's feelings were of a nature merel to te nd to the result he warned her against, ordinary common sense would have induced him to keep young Wordsworth from Natchetts; and with her peculiar temperament, it shewed no great wisdom to have mentioned the subject to her at all. But so it always is. More than half the troubles which befal men in life are caused by their deliberately walking into the midst of them; and what invests the folly with a melancholy absurdity is, that they do so with an air of superior sagacity and reflectiveness that would sit well on them if they were mounting the highest pinnacle of felicity and fortune. So Colonel Deane fancied that by "forewarning" his daughter, he had only "forearmed" her; the fact being, that by this imprudent conversation he had stripped her of her only weapon of defence and safety she had left, namely, her own blindness as to the real state of her heart; and Nora left his presence with all her sympathies more than ordinarily excited in behalf of her ill-used playfellow, and with the painful conviction in her heart that something very like her future happiness was bound up in that against which her father had just issued his verdict so authoritatively.

Perhaps, however, there might be another chance in the Colonel's favour, which neither he, nor Nora, nor we, have yet thought of; and that is, that young Wordsworth himself might not, on his side, intend anything serious towards the young lady. It is clear that he had not hitherto declared his passion, or Nora would hardly have needed the enlightenment on the state of her own heart which we have seen that she has just received. We are afraid we cannot clear up this point very satisfactorily at this stage. Whether he would have done so had he succeeded to the heritage of Bickerton Firs, we think, from our knowledge of his character, to be more than doubtful. Wealth, and the possession of freedom, for a season at least, in order to enjoy it more completely, would have been more likely. Perhaps Colonel Deane knew this, but thought, nevertheless, that his not having been benefited in his fortunes, to any great extent, by the Admiral's will, would be as fuel to the ardour of his attachment for the only daughter of a wealthy country gentleman like himself. Poor men always do fall in love more desperately than rich ones, as we, from experience, can aver; and therefore there may be little hope that Edward Wordsworth will not do so too. However, we shall see. Having made ready the ground for his reception and advances, let us see what the gentleman will do himself.

A few days after the scene detailed in the last chapter, Edward Wordsworth and Arthur arrived at Natchetts. The former was a fine, powerfully-made young man, with features that must have been in boyhood both handsome and pleasing. They were

still well enough to recall this, but the emotions, as well, perhaps, as some of the disappointments of his later life, had obliterated some of the better lines in his countenance, and had hardened into exaggeration others, leaving in their stead a varying expression, which if not absolutely disagreeable, seemed a drawback to the whole contour of his face. In manner, he could be gentleman-like, but was often irritable without reason, as if continually impressed with the idea that he was not approved of. He would sometimes take people up shortly, particularly those of his own age and sex, where a simple expression of differing in opinion would have been sufficient. He bore the mark of disappointment, and of not having learnt from trial, in every feature and word. He was continually foisting his sorrows on others, often uninvited, and inveighing bitterly against those whom he fancied had wronged him, in exaggerated and intemperate terms. And yet in so describing him we wish to imply no more than actual fact. We have already seen that he had laboured under great disadvantages. "Truly," as Herbert had said to Christina, "his parents had a great account to answer, in respect to the trust that a merciful God had imposed upon them, in the person of this and their other children."

After her conversation with her father, Nora had taken much counsel with herself as to the course Edward ought to pursue on coming to Lamford. What before this had seemed comparatively of no account, had become now of the gravest importance in her eyes. Whether her old playfellow was to be any-

thing more to her, depended not so much on herself, but the property which her own heart, alas! seemed to claim in him, determined her to make a bold effort to induce him to earn the esteem of the neighbourhood. If ever he could redeem lost ground; if ever he could wipe off the slur which his own imprudence, and perhaps the malignity of others, had cast on his character, it was now—now, when the sympathy of all at his unjustifiable exclusion from an almost right was strongest. Again, if ever there was a chance of her father's opinion of him being modified, and of his resolution of never receiving him as a son-in-law being suspended, it was now. Much of this, though of course not the latter part, Nora urged upon the delinquent in an early walk on the morning after his arrival, and he must have been a hardened recreant indeed, not to feel such an appeal on such a time, and from such lips. His own old playfellow, radiant in her beauty, heightened as it was by the interest she displayed in the cause she was pleading, her lustrous swimming eyes sparkling in their richness—richer than the dew of the early morn on the grass around them—would, if anything other than the influence of some higher power could have done so, have converted the veriest reprobate. Edward was certainly touched. He kissed her small white hand, and called her his own true Nora, but he treated her views with the decision of a superior intellect. He quite allowed the honest simplicity which prompted them, but he was not a whit swayed by them in consequence.

"You see, Nora," he said, taking a pull at a cigar with which he was pestiferously contaminating the

air, "that all this is begging the question that Bickerton is to remain in the possession of this upstart."

"Oh! Edward, you must not apply that language to Mr. Capel. He is a gentleman bred and born, and of as good a family as you or I, and you will not be tolerated in this place if you speak of him thus."

"What! you are bitten with the same fever about him, eh?"

"Indeed, no, he is no favourite of mine."

"That is lucky for him," interrupted Edward, parenthetically.

"But he is thought well of here," continued Nora, not heeding the interruption, "even by Papa, and I do so want you, Edward, to earn Papa's good will. Do, pray do, try, for my sake."

"Why, I have that already, have I not?" said Edward, smiling at her.

"Yes! but I want you to earn more, to earn his esteem. Will you try?"

"Of course I will; I'll do all you want." She looked so handsome, who could refuse her anything? "I won't call the beggar hard names any more, there!"

"Thanks! Edward. Now tell me what you mean by Mr. Capel's remaining master of Bickerton."

"What I say? what I have thought all along, that we shall find another will."

Nora's face fell. "How can you be so silly?"

"I'll lay my life on it," replied Edward.

"Yes, but you wrote and told us that six months ago. A will was to be found in his library at Bath, then in some lodgings in town; but it has all ended in—."

"Smoke, eh," said her companion, throwing away the end of his cigar. "Well, so it has; but I have found another chance now; shall I tell you what it is?"

"If you like," said Nora, hardly able to conceal her vexation. Edward drew her arm in his and began:—

"You must know that one of the old Admiral's most intimate friends was Mr. Scratton, of Clifton, who knew him better than any one. About three months before his death, Mr. Scratton sailed for Australia on business which was to detain him there more than a year. The Admiral was in perfect health then, and was expected to live for years. After his death a large packet was found addressed to Mr. Scratton, to be delivered into his own hands. The executors of the will, having made the necessary arrangements, the chief of which was to install this friend of yours, Mr. Capel, in his possessions, proceeded to enquire for Mr. Scratton. Mr. Scratton, however, being further off than an ordinary pair of hands would take to reach him, much debate ensued as to what was to be done with the parcel; and after consulting lawyers, &c., it was resolved to send it to him, duly insuring it against loss. It was therefore sent, and we may expect to hear of its arrival in a couple of months more. Now I feel convinced that that parcel contains a later will."

"Oh! Edward, more disappointment!" said Nora: "it seems so unlikely. Why should the Admiral pack it up in such a way?"

"Because he intended Mr. Scratton only to produce it. Mr. Scratton, he thought, would be in England

when he died, but he was taken off so quickly that he had not time to order it to be broken open."

Nora had not patience with him for such nonsense, and therefore received the rest of his rhapsodizing in silence. They walked gently on in this way towards the house, where they were soon called into breakfast by the rest.

We have already said something of Arthur Deane. That gentleman was now receiving his father's congratulations on the coincidence of his own visit taking place with that of Miss Melton, of whom on the last occasion of her presence in Lamford, he was supposed to be desperately enamoured. Whether the Colonel would have really liked such a match for his heir-apparent is not quite clear. But he fancied at this period, that Arthur was, as in general, exercising that exuberance of wit for which he esteemed him so famous, and merely playing off the little flower,—in plain English sporting with Mignonette's feelings. But though Arthur was, perhaps, perfectly capable of indulging in such an amusement, we must give him credit in this case for being really in earnest, and for being as much fascinated by Emmy's beauties as even poor Herbert himself. *He* had not forgotten her, though a year and a half had elapsed, and though she had never shewn the smallest sign of reciprocating his affection, save by laughing at his drollery and appearance; and he had now most devoutly made up his mind, if she would let him, of permanently setting her to bloom among the exotics of the gardens at Natchetts. His addresses to her during her stay in Lamford caused the severest of all the severe pangs

which shot through Herbert's heart. Whenever Emmy appeared in public, there appeared Arthur also at her side. Excepting at Kemp,—whereinto he could not so easily penetrate, Madame d'Aulaincourt's late affliction being a sufficient excuse for receiving none but her most intimate friends,—there was no getting at Emmy without the endurance of his company also, and as the former seemed to tolerate his presence with some complacency, Herbert was sometimes almost ready to forget himself.

Herbert need not have been uneasy: if fate had ordered that she should not be his, she had equally decided that that heart should be sacred from any other earthly influence. It was true, that she would not have him, but his image was not the less engraven upon it, and the reminiscence of him, *as he was*, fondled as tenderly as ever in her breast.

Poor gentle little flower. We seem to see her now, as she stands upon the lawn at Kemp, with those dove-like melancholy eyes gazing at, though not seeing, the old abbey ruins over there beyond the river; the white streamers of her bonnet blown apart by the summer wind; her sylph-like figure in its light muslin dress scarcely seeming to press the grass beneath her tiny feet,—to us a sacred sight!

CHAPTER II.

HOPE DEFERRED.

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee why so pale?
Will, if looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prithee why so pale?—Sir John Suckling.

Herbert's indisposition, as we have said, lasted some ten days or more. Looked at physically, it arose from nothing more than the heat of the season acting on a slightly disordered system; but the nervous irritation under which he had been labouring for some weeks had in some degree exaggerated it, so that that which under ordinary circumstances would have yielded in a day to ordinary remedies, assumed the form of a nervous fever. Nor when it spent itself did the patient at first rally with that promptness which his strong constitution and active habit of body induced the doctor to expect. In this respect old Crompton expressed himself once or twice at Kemp as somewhat perplexed. "There was something affecting Mr. Capel," he said, "over which he had no control, — some annoyance which was depressing the nervous system." He had asked Mr. Dacre, but that gentleman had merely replied that "Yes, Capel was bothering himself upon

some matter where bothering could do no good," but that was all. All the doctor could say was, that until he stopped doing so, or that the cause was removed, his patient would mend but slowly.

Mignonette heard all this with that expressionless look which was the sole blemish in her beauty, and which stood here her friend. No regard at her face could betray the feeling that was within. In truth, she was sorely pained. To think of him suffering was cruel indeed: she had considered the strength of her resolution to consist in the remembrance of *his* want of feeling at a time when he should have had no thought but for her. To know now that his heart-strings were torn and bleeding, troubled her; and yet, though at times her heart misgave her as to the wisdom of her coming, she never thought of relenting. It was not that she loved him less, but that she could not forget that his affection, which she once believed, like her own, nothing could ever obliterate, had waned and become well-nigh extinct for a season. This remembrance made her feel that she never could be happy as his wife. It would be always forcing itself upon her, coupled with the dread of the like occurring again. She had fancied his attachment for her to be what it had proved itself not to be. She loved him under this impression: she could not exist with him under any other. Still—oh! that he would not mourn; oh, that he would bow like her to the inevitable future, and would look back with a smile, not with regrets, upon those days when the sun seemed to shine and nature to smile but for them two alone.

But she had not to feel distress on this score long.

Herbert, in shewing himself after his illness, seemed inclined to respond to her wishes. During the quiet hours of his convalescence, those hours when man's mind as well as his body is most fit for examination of the past, and the forming of holy resolutions for the future, he had tried to look unselfishly into their relative positions. That Emmy, for some reason, wished the engagement to be unrenewed, seemed perfectly manifest; but whether because of his own conduct, or acting in pursuance of that course indicated in her father's letter two years before, was not quite so clear. In either case his own duty appeared plain. Dacre had shewn him that his past conduct would not bear investigation; and whatever motives might be actuating her, he ought to set himself right with her, even at the cost of his own character for constancy and honour. He ought to shew her that he was still ready to redeem his promise, although, blinded by his own pride and obstinacy, he had neglected to do so at the right opportunity; and it would then be for her to say whether she had broken off the connection of her own free-will, with her reasons for adhering to that step. At all events, if she did, the painful feeling of his own misconduct would be removed, even at the expense of her affection, which he valued now more than life. Yes! humble, contrite, he would acknowledge his fault and offer amends, and she would have it in her power either to forgive, or to say, "I never blamed you, I broke off the connection of my own free-will, and I do not desire that it shall be renewed." But through all this Herbert had no doubt now of how the matter really stood, no hope even that

he could be righted. Indeed, either issue disclosed nought but trouble. If it was as Dacre hinted, he had lost her: if, on the other hand, she had never impugned his conduct, she had long ceased to love him. In either issue was despair.

An explanation, therefore, with her he was determined to have; but how or when was no easy matter to decide. And herein he sadly felt the want of advice. Again and again the thought of speaking to Motcombe occurred to him, but he was too weak and languid, and too fearful of retarding his own recovery, and thereby the issue of his last hope, to dwell on this part of the subject too much.

One line of conduct he determined to adopt, as being better under present circumstances both for his cause and for himself, — and that was to treat Mignonette as she had seemed to wish on the night of Colonel's Deane's party; never to press again upon her that subject until he had matured every plan for a thorough explanation with her; to be ever attentive and affectionate, but in every way to let her feel at her ease.

And so it was that Emmy's wishes, detailed above, seemed to come about. These were the days of picnics and park-excursions by day, and of little *reunions* by night. After his recovery, Herbert joined in all of these; Emmy was at first frightened at the sight of him, but his kind cordial manner soon banished this, and finding that he did not intend to distress her by the renewal of the dreaded subject, she always greeted him with a ready welcome smile, and made room for him beside her, if he shewed any inclination

to join her, and always looked for his smile of recognition first when ever they met. It is true that they were seldom left alone. Arthur Deane's assiduities put that out of the question; and besides, it was generally at some festive gathering that they were thrown together. Still this did now and then happen, and at one pic-nic, where the party had got dispersed in the woods, Herbert found himself sitting by her on a felled tree while she was sketching. He could not help wishing to sound her for a moment, and fortune for a few minutes favoured the wish.

"I should like to have that sketch, if you will put us both as we are, into the foreground," he said.

"Why?" she asked, and seeing him smile; "Tell me, you have got some odd reason."

"It will remind me of what I never expected to see—us both sitting in this Platonic fashion talking, as if we had only been introduced to each other a month ago."

"I don't think that," she said, good-humouredly; "it appears to me that we always meet as very old and dear friends. I never feel so happy now as when we meet, because it is on these terms. But you shall have the sketch."

"How old is Gertrude?" he asked, abruptly. Gertrude was the next sister in age to Emmy.

"Fifteen;" was the reply.

"Is she like you?"

"You know she is not. She is a great tall strong girl."

"I meant in disposition."

"Are you sure you know my disposition, as it is?"

"No! I am not, I wish to heaven I was. I shall try and enquire about it some day."

"Please do not, Herbert," she said, looking up, with something very much of old days in her face. "Please do not, it will only give us both pain: think how happy it makes me that we should be as we are; you would not change this, would you, when I ask?"

Herbert could not speak for emotion, and Emmy, placing her little hand on his arm, said, imploringly, "See, here comes my persecutor; stay with me, and be as you always are."

All this was as a death-knell to his heart, and yet it brought some comfort, for he could not shut out a slight hope that she was getting more and more fond of his presence; and that in a little, when the explanation came of his conduct, and the acknowledgment of his faults, she might even yet relent.

How he prayed night and day for that!

The reader must have wondered, ere this, whether the change that all these thoughts must have brought in his manner had not excited surprise or remark from others in Lamford; of course it had, but not to such an extent as might have been expected. His illness, the marks of which remained upon him for weeks even after his recovery, was sufficient, in the minds of some, to account for his demeanour, and to others there had always been parts of his conduct unaccountable in any way. But there were two who remarked the change, and were induced to think about and wonder at it. These were Madame d'Aulaincourt and Christina Percy.

The former was at first very much puzzled; for by watching Herbert narrowly, and she had good opportunities, she came to the conclusion that—when or how it began, or why there should be any difficulty about it, she could not imagine, but that so it was—Herbert was very much in love with her little visitor, Mignonette. She was too well bred, however, to take any notice, the more especially as there did not seem to be any reciprocation on the little lady's part to speak of. She was very friendly and cordial, and doubtless would have him, if he asked; but what the difficulty was, unless he felt himself compromised with her favourite Wallflower, she could not for the life of her imagine. Once, from a curiosity which she could not repress, she asked Cecile if the acquaintance between Herbert and Emmy at Bramsholme had been a very intimate one. But ecile knew as little as herself, and it appeared to her mother, on reflection, that Emmy must have been so very young at the time, that to pursue the enquiry further in this direction was mere waste of time.

Herbert's change of demeanour was also a subject of wonder to Christina Percy. Her position with Herbert at this time was anything but a comfortable one. When together, he was just the same with her as before, but there was no advance upon it, and he sought Emmy's company in instances where he used to seek hers. That there had been something between them, Christina began to fear, but it certainly did not seem on the lady's side. She, too, suspended her judgment, and determined to watch, while Bella Dillwyn and Blanche Neeld, by way of setting her

mind at rest, assured her that Mr. Capel was only an inveterate flirt after all.

The few words of conversation with Emmy, already recorded, had made Herbert very anxious for the explanation which he had resolved to have. And yet he would not hasten it. But time sped on: six weeks had now passed since her arrival at Kemp, and August was at hand. He had given to the plan he had in view a fair amount of deliberation, and Emmy was as well with him as ever he could expect her to be under present circumstances. He was certain that she pitied him too. If he, then, could but meet with an opportunity for speaking with her, now was the time. But he feared being over-hasty. The magnitude of the issue to him—how his heart beat when he thought of it!—made him hesitate to take any step the rashness of which might mar all his hitherto well-acted forbearance. It was then that he looked round again, as he had done before, for advice. Dacre was there—Dacre, who had never lost an opportunity to help him in his suit—who was continually at Emmy's side, detailing anecdotes of his goodness, praising him for his brave heart, and envying, in speeches absurdly romantic for him, the girl who was destined to be his wife,—Dacre, who was continually upsetting Arthur Deane's plans for kidnapping the young lady to Natchetts, whither he only intended to ask those to meet her who would not stand in his own light. There was Dacre. But Dacre would not do: he was an enthusiastic advocate, but he had no tact, no experience of the position,—he would not do. Herbert must try Henry Motcombe; and if he suggested his

going to Bramsholme, he must go thither first,—yes, it should be Henry Motcombe. And perhaps another objection which Herbert felt to opening his whole heart to Dacre arose from the old, old fault—the fault of all others he had by this time most reason to be ashamed of—pride. He could not make up his mind to bare all the mainspring of his dreams and his romance to a man who would but grasp them—tenderly enough, as far as was in his nature, it may be, but—with the forceps of fact; who, though he might say little, out of regard to his friend's weakness, would handle the subject in imagination as something to be winnowed of its romance before he could approach it. He felt too proud to submit his tender feelings to so hard a test. And thus, perchance, he lost sterling counsel, because he would not receive it without its being rendered pleasant to the sense. Dacre's advice might have saved him every blow that was to come: we do not say it would; but it might. Again, it might not. Still, with so true a friend, it was worth the asking, even worth the risk of a sneer and a lesson, if accompanied with the chance of a good result. But this was not to be. Herbert would take counsel of Henry Motcombe. And so, one day, at the close of July, he sought him at his lodgings.

Since Frederica Repton's death the Curate had been but little in society. Not much notice was taken of the fact, for even before this he was not generally found at any but the most confined gaieties. It is not unlikely that after some little time had elapsed, people in general began to feel that Henry had sustained a loss in the dead girl. Nobody men-

tioned that such was so; but a sort of universal consent, as it were, to leave him to himself, seemed to proclaim it. Perhaps the sense of this creeping upon the community produced a shock, when it made itself felt, leaving something like a feeling of awe at a blow which was the more striking in that it had not hitherto been perceived. There is something mighty in the calamity which for weeks and months has been working unknown to us, yet steadily bowing down unseen one with whom we are in constant communication,—the sensation gradually awaking in us that, while we have been speaking to him day after day, on ordinary matters, the blow has been wearing and wearing him,—a blow such as we feel, now that we realize it, would have been almost too much for us. So it might have been with Lamford and its Curate. Something was wrong, and he was left to himself.

Henry was an odd person to make a confidant; he never reposed confidence in others himself, and seemed not, therefore, a genial quarter in which for others to place it. But that was no reason for deterring Herbert. The latter rather thought he saw under that brooding exterior deeper sympathy, if it could be excited. Those still waters contained for him the spring of hope. He sought him, therefore. Henry received him gladly, having long, in his inmost heart, learnt to love that mixture of enthusiasm and sadness. That there was something wrong here too he also could see; but he never expected that he should ever know it. Herbert was too self-reliant, too much a reader of the signs of the human heart, in its worldly sense, ever to want a better corrector for common difficulties than his own

sense. It could, therefore, be no common trouble which brought him to him. After ordinary greetings, Herbert thus began,—

"Harry, I am sick at heart."

"That is bad."

"Very bad: and I come to you to help me."

"You know if I can I will."

"I am sure you will. I want advice."

"Is it worldly trouble?"

"Of course: we have few troubles here but what are, or what spring from such."

"I don't know. But Mr. Dacre will advise you better than I."

"I think not, or I would not come to you. I seek the help of him only who has a heart to feel my sickness. My trouble is a worldly trouble, but Dacre is too worldly to understand it."

"Come, you must talk plainer than that," said the Curate, "or I shall have neither head nor heart to help you."

Herbert sat down.

"When I was a younger man, Harry, and had to work for a crust of bread, I found it sweeter, when earned under the light of a pair of eyes that shone only for me. It was in a country village, and surrounded by kind hearts and helping hands. The time came when I was to leave it, to better myself, as the housemaids say; and I did leave with those promises which we all make in like case. In a year the father of her who to me was dearer than my life wrote to forbid my ever hoping to have his daughter, and the daughter sent back my presents and letters,

in accordance, as he said, with his wishes, and in token that she acceded to his verdict. For twelve long sick months I waited for some sign that this consent was either extorted or enforced. But in my blind, proud indignation I could not see that duty might prevent my having this sign, or that the same *duress* which dictated her accord with her father's act, might not have acted also in preventing her from giving the sign. And so I got suspicious, then angry, then revengeful. I plucked her from my heart, as I thought, but only from my memory, for the time as it happened,—rather say, I let the matter be, neither forgotten nor remembered, in its pure light—but I let it be. Between two and three years elapsed, and I came here. What shall I say? You know."

"I guess, Herbert," said Henry; for the first time in his life addressing him by his Christian name, and so shewing that he felt for him: "I guess, Herbert. You broke your word."

Herbert winced.

"I am sure of it," said the Curate. "You let the poor girl hear of your fortune, and went not. Whether your mouth had promised this, I know not; but for all that you were bound to go—to go to her, and you did not go to her."

Herbert covered his face with his hands.

"Who told you first you had done this, and when?" continued Henry, after a pause.

"Dacre; and when it was too late. By simply doubting whether *her* consent to her father's letter had ever been given or not, he tore at once the veil from my eyes."

"Where is she now?"

"Here."

"I see," said Henry. "She has come, bearing only in her heart the remembrance of the past. Oh! Herbert, how could you, who are so honest, so full of every good feeling and impulse, trifle so with yourself?"

"What can I say? I was blind. 'The serpent tempted me, and I did eat.'"

"And the taste, as then, has opened your eyes. Miss Melton of course will not renew the past?"

"I fear not," said Herbert, dejectedly: "but it is on that ground that I am here. She loves me still, I am sure: but whether she refuses to renew the past because of my conduct, or in pursuance of her father's letter—"

"Oh! to any one who sees her, having heard your account, there can be no doubt," said Henry; "and I do not see how you can expect it. Still, acknowledgment of your fault will go a great way with such a girl as she is, if her heart be not steeled with a similar armour to that which has done yours so much mischief—pride."

"I fear," said Herbert, "that there is little hope with her. She is kind, easy, even affectionate with me; but that makes me fear all the more that her mind is made up. Besides, if she were not so, would she have made this visit here at all, with me at Bickerton?"

Henry looked up. "I did not think of that: that is the worst sign for you in the whole."

"Would you have me go into Somersetshire now, and see her father first?" asked Herbert.

The Curate paced the room for some moments. "If you had done that before she came, it might have answered; but now, with my imperfect knowledge of the man, I shrink from advising it. He might say that which, though just if it came from his daughter, you would hardly bear from him. Besides, if he even smile, would it sway his daughter? You know her best, but from my small powers of discernment, I doubt it. I think if it were my place, knowing you as I do, I would sooner hazard everything on an explanation with her. If she were in Somersetshire, I should even speak to her first. Tell her, if you please, that you will go to her father, and get her, if you can, to yield her consent on the contingency of his relenting. You will be well off if you induce her to yield even that."

"I feel so," said Herbert. "I fall in with all you say. I might go down,—I might carry everything there, and fail here. And I am not sure whether such a step would not strike Mignonette in a tenderer point, namely, that I should dare to think that she, who *would* not forget me at a parent's bidding, *could be made* to forgive the wrong I have done her at a like command."

"No; I hardly think I should advise you well, if I counselled you to go. You have sported with your own happiness, and there is no way of mending your position but by boldly telling the truth, and appealing to her heart. Your best and only chance lies there."

"Thanks," said Herbert, rising. "Your counsel, Harry, the reverse of cheering as it is, has done me good. Perhaps I may have to come again, to ask you

what I can do to help me to bear the heaviest blow that God can let fall upon me—to enquire, indeed, how you bore when all hope was gone."

Motcombe's face clouded for an instant, but it was not from displeasure. He pressed Herbert's hand for a moment.—"There is but one consolation, which you should know where to find as well as I: nevertheless, it is my privilege to administer such. Come, then, and drink when you will, for the fountain never runs dry, and the waters never lack. When you will, Herbert, I shall be ready."

Herbert left him lighter-hearted, though the prospect before him was as dark as ever. "Poor Harry!" he said to himself; "and yet I doubt whether even his bereavement can be such as mine may be."

And so he was to see Emmy, that was determined; perhaps to make her young heart bleed again—he who had lacerated it so cruelly already. Oh! if but this once his star were to be in the ascendant—if the bountiful God, who had so raised and blessed him, were till after this to defer staying the showering of His mercies that had been poured upon him,—Emmy's heart should never have cause to bleed again;—should not a holier balm, a warmer oil be poured into it, in proportion to the wounds it had received?

No, no, Herbert! it is not here that we must look for happiness without alloy.

CHAPTER III.

FRUIT RIPENING.

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods.—F. TENNYSON.

BUT the issue was not to be yet. Herbert's patience had to be tried before he was to know his fate. Now that his mind was made up, this delay was all the harder to bear. The fact that the happiness of a life depended upon the events of one short half-hour, made him almost wild to know his fate. But he was not the less aware that precipitation might ruin everything, and that to attempt an interview with Emmy, of which there was the smallest chance of an interruption, would be destructive of his every hope. So he was fain to wait, as he best might: and it was the middle of August, nigh the close of her visit at Kemp, before the wished-for opportunity arrived, and he was able to speak to her face to face.

Meantime, the fineness of the season, with its long days and the tempting beauty of the country, suggestive of excursions and fishing-parties, drew the different families of the neighbourhood much together. Dacre, as we have before hinted, was an ardent flogger

of the streams, and being a stranger, every member of the locality vied with each other to gratify this propensity in him: and as these efforts generally resulted in invitations to various parks where there were tempting trout-streams, it not unfrequently happened, that parties of pleasure were made up to accompany him thither, during which he was generally left to his favourite sport, while the others devoted themselves to any amusement which the place, or their own imaginations, suggested.

Every one knows how such festivities as these are favourable to the growth and increase of any little attachments which have a tendency to develope themselves; and therefore, in those of this history, the relations which existed between Edward Wordsworth and Nora Deane, Bella Prudden and Hetherington, and, perhaps, even the position of Arthur Deane towards Emmy Melton, were not exceptions to the rule. Respecting the latter gentleman, we may at once declare, without reserve, that, as the summer got on, great as his opportunities, and assiduous as he was in turning them to account, his progress in the quarter he had set his heart did not seem to answer to the time and exertion devoted to it. As Edward Wordsworth consolingly remarked to him—"A bat asleep could see that Mignonette did not care a rap for him;" and even Nora, when she was mischievously inclined, could not help suggesting to her brother, whether it would not be a good plan to ask Mr. Capel how *he* managed it. At which taunt the gallant son of Mars was fain to look indignant, not to say silly.

"You don't think, Ned," said the gaby to his mentor one day,—"You don't think, Ned, she cares much for him, do you?—It is only to play me off, isn't it?"

"What the deuce should she play you off for, when she has got you fast and tight?" said Mentor.

"Well! but you don't think she cares for him."

"Do you ask me seriously?" replied Ned.

"Indeed I do."

"Nonsense: what does it matter to you? You don't care for the girl?"

"Don't I, just!" rejoined Arthur, looking more melancholy than usual.

"Well, then, I may just as well put you out of your misery, like a humane man as I am. Capel has only got to say the word, and she is at Bickerton."

"Eh! you are joking," said Arthur, in his most piercing tones.

"I am not, indeed. I may be wrong, certainly, but I have seen a good deal of the complaint in my time, and I think so."

"I suspect you have seen a good deal of a great many complaints in your lifetime, Mr. Edward," interrupted Nora, who had just entered the room, and had gathered the nature of their conversation; "but I am not so sure that you have learnt much that is useful therefrom. We ladies, too, think we see a little in these matters, and I for one don't agree with you."

Wordsworth gave vent to a laugh, half of derision and half of amusement, at this speech, while Arthur, recovering a little, expressed his approval by the sentiment—"Nora, you're a brick!"

"You may laugh, but I'm sure I'm right," said Nora: "The love is all on the side of Mr. Capel, if there is any at all, and even with him it is a sort of patronising, brotherly love, which may have arisen from a great intimacy with her and her sisters, when she was a mere child, as she must have been when he was staying down—there—where she lives; though, to be sure," with a mischievous look at her brother, "I certainly do think that Arthur would have no chance if Mr. Capel were to propose."

"Oh!" cried Arthur, ruefully.

"But then," continued his sister, "it is partly in Arthur's favour that Mr. Capel does not propose: for what reason can he have for delaying, if there be anything between them?"

"Well, that proves what I say," said Wordsworth, "that the love is not on his side. I suspect we pretty well agree: you say that if he was in love he would propose, and I say that if he proposed she would have him."

"But I think that there is nothing on either side," said Nora.

"Except that Mignonette would prefer 'upstart' to Arthur."

Nora looked up, and Wordsworth began to make sham apologies. Meanwhile the unfortunate Arthur was much discomposed at the little coincidence that there was in the opinions of his sister and his friend, and when the former had retired he returned to the charge.

"I'll tell you what, old fellow," said his friend, "I

have half a mind to enter the lists myself in your favour. I should have done so long ago, but that I have such a thorough contempt for this Capel."

But even Arthur did not seem to relish this proposal. Great as was his devotion to his friend, the idea of leaving his intended wife to the addresses of Mr. Edward Wordsworth did not strike him as so felicitous a proceeding as his predilection for that gentleman might have led one to believe. He let the subject, therefore, drop for the present, and retired to break his heart in solitude and cigars.

The contempt which Edward Wordsworth said he felt for Herbert had been evidenced once or twice ere this, but as it shewed itself only in the very unequivocal form of uncivility, it is to be questioned whether those who witnessed its display recognised it quite in the shape he meant it to assume.

After Edward's arrival, Herbert had gone considerably out of his way to be on good terms with this young man, and the more so from feeling that allowances ought to be made for the great disappointment which had befallen him, and for a natural feeling of irritation against the man, who, if not the cause of it, had mainly benefited by his loss. But Wordsworth would have none of this, he persisted in acting as if he thought Capel to have fraudulently dispossessed him of his rights, and the latter had no course left but to take no further notice of him, when they met in society, than by a mere bow. Indeed, Wordsworth put it out of his power to do otherwise, for instead of following a similar course himself, which

would have been the wisest plan, he was continually dropping *inuendos* which, had Herbert been a man of like temperament to himself, would have ended in the disturbance of many of the social *réunions* which made the summer at Lamford so thoroughly delightful to many folks.

Wordsworth's conduct in this respect, under *his* circumstances, amounted to the blindest folly. It irritated his host, the Colonel, against him, making him even almost wish to lose his son for a time, if his absence would only be the means of transporting his guest out of the neighbourhood; while it caused pang upon pang in the heart of the girl who loved him alone of all the people in the world, and whose wishes he ought to have consulted, if he did not choose wholly to follow them.

Wordsworth's threat about Emmy was of course mere empty bragging. The latter's disapproval of him almost amounted to horror, and any attempt of his even to converse with her always resulted in the expressionless look which was the only unbecoming dress her face could put on.

It was at one of these *picnics*, so often alluded to, that a fair opportunity of noticing this offered itself to Edwin Dacre. There was no fishing to be had in this case, and so Dacre could, as Herbert remarked, just for once afford to make himself agreeable. We will take that part of the festivity when dinner is being made ready. The party are seated in groups in a pretty wide circle, quite small enough for each to communicate with the other, and quite extended enough for any one group

to carry on a *sotto voce* conversation within itself. In one place is seated Emmy sketching, as is her custom on these occasions, and beside her is Arthur Deane, who is cutting the lettuces which Edward Wordsworth is trying to persuade her he is converting into a salad. Close to her is Sylvia Trentham, not listening to her eternal adjunct, Walter Harbottle, who is saying something which no one can hear if she can't. In another group are Lester Harbottle and Clarinda Trentham, both of them tremendously busy in setting the feast, the latter talking vociferously in her most pronounced accent. Helping her is her little sister Lucy, who has hitherto shewn much proficiency in breaking glasses at inauspicious moments; while bustling, laughing, and attempting to hide her delinquencies is Cecile d'Aulaincourt. Some way off, under that very shady lime, is old Harbottle, a group in himself, with a handkerchief over his face, fast asleep. Coming round the circle is another group in the Dip there, by the brook, mostly on camp-stools as befits their age and stamp,—Mrs. Deane, Mrs. Harbottle, and Mr. Trevanion. The Colonel also is among them, wondering what old Harbottle comes for, if he can't keep awake. And Nora is not far off, arranging a towel and a small basin near the stream for *some* one to wash his hands with, when he has done making "that salad." Coming round the circle still further, we have on the higher ground, Christina Percy and Dacre, both seated on the grass, and Herbert close by, standing against a tree, and listening to them, but in such a position as to command the rest of the com-

pany as we have described them. Besides these, there are other groups, but a general idea, such as we have given, will be sufficient for our purpose.

"What are you thinking of, Miss Percy?" said Dacre to Christina, as the party were thus occupied. Herbert was listening to some one on the opposite side of the circle, and did not hear the question, nor the reply.

"I do not like that question," said the person addressed. "It always suggests to me that I have no right to let my thoughts wander upon my neighbours."

"You are too strait-laced," replied Dacre. "Half the good things we think of our neighbours come from watching them, without hearing what they say."

"You are too bad," said Christina. "I suppose you think we should get on better if mankind were without the gift of speech."

"I did not imply that, though in some instances awkward differences would be avoided. I only meant that we think the best of those whose beauties we regard at a distance, and before we know them better."

"I suspect you meant more: you always do mean more than what you say. And on my side, I should not like my words to be always the interpretators of what I think. My words are often playing me false; my thoughts, at all events, treat me kindly, if I keep them to myself."

"They shall be sacred in this instance," said Dacre, "if I may share them."

"You say so because I seem disinclined to part with them. You attach importance to their value,

because I seem to make so much of them. But you are mistaken in this instance. I only said I disliked the question, 'Of what are you thinking, Miss Percy?' because I am so often frightened at myself when I hear it. At the moment you so addressed me I was wondering to myself why Miss Melton always took to sketching when she was out in these parties."

"I will tell you why," replied Dacre, in a low tone; "because she does not like *her* thoughts to wander."

Christina looked up to read his countenance, not understanding this speech, but could make nothing of it. She continued:—

"I thought it at first ill-bred, but afterwards, when I saw that on the first occasion she always put her book away, and that she was ever as ready to make herself as useful and agreeable as the rest, it struck me it was the result of an old habit which had grown on her never to leave her hands unemployed; but still it seems unusual, and so I sometimes wish she would not do it."

Herbert here joined in the conversation, apologetically. "Miss Melton is a stranger in the country, and may see much worth carrying home."

Dacre nearly laughed outright. "Our group to wit, eh, Capel? Miss Percy looking philosophic, I looking panegyric, and you,—what shall we say of you?"

"Say nothing of me," replied Herbert, laughing; "I have been taken already, and was so charmed with the sketch, that I asked Miss Melton to give it to me."

"Cool, certainly! supposing we were all to do the same."

"It would be of no use in your case, Dacre," said

Herbert; "you would be sketched eternally the same—always fishing in the distance."

"Ask Mr. Capel what he was thinking of while we were talking," said Christina to Dacre, in a low tone.

"Of course: a good thought," said Dacre. "I say, Capel, what were you thinking of ten minutes ago, just before you spoke about Miss Melton's sketching?"

"I will tell you," replied Herbert, coming close to them, and throwing himself on the grass opposite Christina; "I was trying to judge from the faces of Deane and Wordsworth, as they were speaking to Miss Melton, which had the most good in them."

"Nonsense," said Dacre; "you need not go to their faces for that!"

"Yes! but I did; I was trying to put everything I know aside, and to answer my own question from their faces."

"And what do you think, Miss Percy?" asked Dacre.

Christina turned her quick brown eye to the faces indicated, and replied instantly,

"There is most good in Mr. Wordsworth."

"Why do you speak so quickly?"

"I was afraid of looking too long," she answered, "for fear associations of what he really has been should crowd upon me. I looked at the faces, therefore, only as strange faces, and I answer at once, in Mr. Wordsworth's."

"And you, Dacre?" said Capel.

"I can't read a face in that way," replied Dacre: "I can abstract well enough, if I have never known the ground before; but I have formed my opinion so

thoroughly of both those gentlemen already, that I could not trust myself to read their faces impartially."

"Have you?" said Capel; "then tell me what you make of Mr. Arthur Deane, for I have by no means made up my mind."

"Shall I? What does Miss Percy say?" asked Dacre.

"Why should you not?" said Christina.

"I should say that Mr. Arthur Deane was at this moment in love with Miss Melton."

The other two burst out laughing. "Why, of course he is," said Christina; "but that is not reading his character."

"I beg your pardon: if you will allow me to proceed, you will find it will come to that," said Dacre, in his cold tones. "I should say, I repeat that Mr. Arthur Deane is at this moment in love with Miss Melton, which shews his discrimination of the excellent, and at the same time, that he thinks Mr. Wordsworth is in the same state, which evinces that he is———."

"A very silly fellow," said Christina.

Herbert made a gesture of impatience, and turned to look at the two in question.

"I think also," said Dacre, "that the real devotion of young Deane shews something good; for nobody ever loved devotedly a good and pure woman who wanted that within him which the event might not ripen to rich and fair fruit. Hence we have something right here. It may be empty enough, light enough, and may pass away sooner than enough, but it is of the right sort. What have you good on the other side

that we know of? and certainly there is little good in what we see."

"I do not agree with you, Dacre," said Herbert, turning round; "I find in Deane nothing but what is empty and counterfeit. His manner of courting Miss Melton is all sham. He must needs groan when he would laugh, and be grotesque when he should be easy. If he thinks that this pleases the young lady, he is simply stupid; if he believes it does not, he is no more than a mountebank. Wordsworth, on the other hand, in his utter disregard for the opinions of society, in his careless love of himself, in his denial of all common prudence for his own interests, in his treatment even of this very Deane himself, has something more to be respected in him than the other."

"I take it, he is not less a fool from your own shewing, Capel," said Dacre.

"He has been a fool from many causes which other men would not have been influenced by," said Herbert; "the other is a fool without any cause to make him one, excepting that he does not know how to be anything better."

"Eh! What? Not fishing to-day Mr. Dacre? How is that?" said old Harbottle, coming up and looking somewhat warm after his nap.

"You forget that there is nothing to catch here, Mr. Harbottle," said Dacre.

"True. To be sure I forgot that," said the old gentleman: "Capel, you should find here more sport, you ought to have plenty. There is the Lamm, for instance."

"All of which, worth trying, belongs to Colonel Deane," replied Herbert.

"Well, but there is the rapid below Mouse Island," said Harbottle.

"As far as I am concerned, he is welcome to the whole river Ouse up to Bedford," returned Herbert; "but I do not think he will do much with a fly near Mouse, the water is too deep."

"It has got deep then within the last ten months," cried Wordsworth, in his most offensive tone.

"Capel is right," said Dacre; "I have tried the water in question, and I found little to be got there. But there is an enticing little piece not much lower down."

"He means that bit by Lepp-farm," said Herbert.

"What! have you not been there?" said the Colonel.

"I was not aware it was Capel's water."

"Yes; that it is, and a mile and a half below as well," said the Colonel.

"You might fish that, Dacre," said Herbert, "the day we have that little party to the Mouse in Miss d'Aulaincourt's honour."

"Eh!" cried Harbottle, "a party to Mouse Island. When?"

"The time is not quite fixed, I think," said Herbert, with a glance at Emmy. "Miss d'Aulaincourt expressed a wish for it, and it is to be her party. Mind, you will have *a carte blanche* at Bickerton for everything you want; I bargain only for one point, that I come as a mere guest, like the rest."

This was the result of a piece of tact, in order that Wordsworth might not feel humiliated at being his guest on such ground; which consideration, however,

was somewhat gratuitous, as far as that gentleman was concerned, since he would have come, under any circumstances, without even taking a hint as to regulating his own conduct on the occasion from it.

"But I am afraid mamma can't come," said Cecile, despondently.

"Surely if Mrs. Deane will give her countenance that difficulty will be removed," said Herbert.

"Of course," said Harbottle; "I hope, Cecile, you will ask me."

"If you promise to keep awake, Mr. Harbottle," said Cecile, squeezing the old fellow's arm.

"Why, my dear, of course I shall at your party. It is a capital idea, such a retired spot, too. When is it to be?"

"You must give me a week or so," said Herbert.

"I must see that we have two water-proof punts at command, to ferry you all over: the water is not too shallow about there."

"Why not have the Folly?" cried Wordsworth; "I and Arthur will charter her, and then the ladies can have a sail over if they like."

Dacre looked at the two, and could not help thinking that there was no necessity for their "chartering" any such commodity, seeing they had enough of their own and to spare. He was not aware that the "Folly" was a sailing vessel.

"If I might suggest," continued Herbert, "Miss d'Aulaincourt would do wisely to have the punts, at all events, ready for use; *you* can have the 'Folly' if you like; only at pic-nics one can't be too much on the side of prudence."

"What nonsense," said Wordsworth, hardly able to contain his contempt; "if one knows how to manage the little sailing craft, what imprudence can there be?"

"Well! have a punt for me," said old Harbottle; "that is all I bargain for."

"By all means have the punts," said the Colonel: "those who dislike them need not use them."

"Won't it be fun, Emmy," said Cecile, throwing herself on the grass opposite her friend; "We are to go up to Bickerton, and tease Mr. Capel's housekeeper to give us all we want. We will choose a day for seeing her when he and Mr. Dacre go to town,—won't it be fun! It will make Christina jealous, perhaps"—this in a whisper.

The glowing girl who spoke was a beautiful sight, not rendered the less lovely by those sable garments of woe, which, still worn, recalled the lost and gentle Rose, and contrasted forcibly with the bright sparkling gorgeousness of her vivacious countenance. Truly Emmy's presence seemed to have done its work, and well to have dried up her burning tears, and to have solaced into tranquillity the passionate grief of her young heart.

CHAPTER IV.

WIDOWHOOD.

He talk'd of daggers and of darts,
Of passions and of pains;
Of weeping eyes, and wounded hearts,
Of kisses and of chains.
He said, tho' love was kin to grief,
She was not born to grieve;
He said, though many rued belief,
She safely might believe.
But still the lady shook her head,
And swore by yea and nay.

Moonshine: a Charade, by W. M. Praed.

It was Herbert's plan, during the time covered by such events as those recorded in the preceding chapter, to seek by dropping in, as if naturally, at Kemp, at all hours, that interview with Mignonette on which now depended his worldly happiness. So well did he manage this, and so accidental did his visits appear, that the young lady's apprehensions were not in the least excited. Nevertheless, it was long before his object was gained. He had always been a welcome visitor at Kemp, and his appearance never excited remark: but invariably his object was thwarted. Either Madame d'Aulaincourt or her daughter were present, or both, or Emmy herself was absent, and

did not shew, or, as was sometimes the case, they were all out. Herbert, therefore, had nothing for it but patience; and the delay had so far this advantage, that the servants got accustomed to his eccentric visits, and soon began to let him enter unannounced. At last, about the middle of August, when he had been pursuing this course for about three weeks, Herbert found the coast clear. It wanted three days to the *pic-nic* at Mouse Island, and Madame d'Aulaincourt and Cecile had gone up to Natchetts, to make some arrangement about the commissariat required for that festivity, leaving at home Emmy, who had quite enough of the society of Arthur Deane when she walked abroad, to wish to step into it now unnecessarily. She remained behind, therefore, and was in the drawing-room on Herbert's entrance. This apartment, it must be mentioned, had on one side a south aspect, and at the east ended in a large conservatory, running the whole length of the wall, through which the inmates could pass into the gardens. Both the windows of this conservatory, which communicated with the room, as well as the door from the former into the garden, were open on the present occasion, in consequence of the heat of the weather, which was excessive. But Herbert did not enter this way. He came in by the door, in the ordinary fashion. One of the servants had seen him, and had mentioned that "Missus" and Miss Cecile had but just gone up to Natchetts, and that there was no one but Miss Melton at home, and had then left him to enter or not, as he pleased. For a moment the blood rushed into his face at the announcement,

but his fate was before him—he knew that it was no time for trepidation, and with one half-whispered prayer for success, he entered the room.

Emmy was standing at the table, arranging shades of silk for Cecile. She looked up with the usual welcome smile, and was on the point of asking him to sit down, and talk to her till the others came back, when a second look at his countenance told her what use he was going to make of their absence, and she stopped, while her own face became deadly pale.

Herbert, after his first words "What alone!" walked into the room, and rested one arm on the back of that chair which had supported Nora Deane's some months back, when she first canvassed with Madame d'Aulaincourt the news of his succession to Bickerton Firs. For a moment he could not speak; the dread of giving her pain—the desire to tranquillize her first—the fearful importance to him of the issue of this visit, almost choked him, and for some moments he was silent.

"At last I see you alone, Emmy," he said at length; "for months have I sought for this, and failed; at last I may hope to be heard."

At the commencement of these few words, which were uttered in a deep low tone, Emmy had sunk into a chair, and placed her head upon her right hand, while her elbow rested on the table. At the conclusion of them, she as rapidly rose to her feet, and clasping both hands, said with a beseeching look,—

"Oh! no, please, let it not be; it can be of no use. Spare me, Herbert, if you will not spare your-

self. It can bring nothing but more suffering, more grief, more despair." And, spite of all her efforts, her tears began to fall.

"Am I then prejudged? Is everything that has happened since that last parting to speak against me without a hearing? The May moon, you told me then, was the sign of hope, and fortune, and joy to come. It has set: we meet again, and I am not to be heard."

Emmy had regained her chair, and was weeping noiselessly.

"Yourself can tell best," she said, "whether I have judged you unfairly. If I beg you not to seek a hearing now, is it not because you would not seek a hearing before? You did not appear to be heard when you would have been heard."

"That is my fault, I allow," he replied. "Still, I have not had a hearing; and if I have no right to expect it, *mercy* should bid you to accord it. You have passed your verdict on me, Emmy. Are verdicts never reversed?"

"If I wish you to forbear, it is as much for your own happiness as for mine. You acknowledge yourself in fault: what can you ask, then, which I can grant?"

"Forgiveness, Emmy."

Emmy turned a look of the deepest sorrow on him, and a sad smile lighted up her tear-stained features in a manner inexpressibly touching.

"Have the last two months, then, passed for nought, Herbert? Have you been at my side for days, and have read me to so little purpose as to think that I have not forgiven?"

"No forgiveness is complete which does not restore the erring one to his old place," answered her lover. "Am I then to be told that, without hearing me, you have decided that that shall not be?"

"I have decided that which, as a woman, I was bound to decide," returned Emmy proudly. "Look on the past, Herbert, and ask yourself whether that wife would be worthy of your love who allowed her feelings to be so played with as mine have been?"

"Yes," he said eagerly, "and more worthy than ever, if, sinking a false pride, she as of old consented to listen to his plea, that he had never sported with them at all."

She looked up through her tears, in surprise, and he continued—

"Emmy, you do not know—and I would to God you never could know, that your father played me false—that he told me an untruth. If I believed his word—the word of a priest, that the breaking-off of that engagement was in accordance with *your* wishes, *you* of all people ought least to blame me for that. True, it was a great, a grievous fault,—'twere far better in me to have doubted the father, than to have questioned for a moment the daughter's plighted word. But it was *your* father, Emmy; and if ever such a fault found indulgence at any one's hands, it should be at *yours*. Even as it was, I could not believe him all at once; twelve long months after that, and twice that time from our last parting, it took me to believe the whole. Then, when no sign came, no common message, even through those who said they should see me —when not a token that you were true, remained—"

"Nay, Herbert, there was a token. In the list of those things which I had given you, which was *demanded* at my hands, I withheld the mention of one: where was my hair?"

"Alas! my pride made me think it was an accidental omission," said he, hanging his head. "In that I erred again, I know I erred."

"It was *I* that erred," said Emmy, "in thinking that such a love as I could inspire could live without renewal. It wanted tokens, messages, signs, which it would have been unmaidenly and wrong in me to send, and the sending of which would have justly exposed me to your contempt: it wanted these to fan it, and keep it alive against the cold wind of absence, which was rapidly rendering it extinct."

She spoke this with more irony and bitterness than perhaps she ever before assumed; and it shewed most clearly in what feeling she had most been wounded. She fancied she had inspired a love such as rarely is inspired, patient, high-souled, and lasting. The event had shewed her, as she thought, that it was an every-day love, no better than that which any other girl might inspire.

"No!" cried Herbert, wildly, "extinct it never was, and never would have been: it was partly smothered. And smothered by what? not by the cold blast of absence or indifference, but by the choking influence of my own culpable pride. Yes, Emmy, my pride was wounded—my pride was wounded at seeing, as I saw, such a love as mine so easily relinquished. And was not that in some degree a pardonable fault? I thought my love so great, so worthy of being prized, that even

you, Emmy, deserving so much as you did, ought not to have slighted it; and my pride was wounded that you should. The more I believed that such a love was your due, the more was I indignant that you could so readily cast it aside."

"Oh! Herbert, you are deceiving yourself," said Emmy, with streaming eyes: "all this may be, as far as the commencement of your inconstancy is concerned. But the love you bore me was not the love I thought it was, or it would have stood even against such influences as these. Where was that affection which was to bear every rebuff, every obstacle, even of disruption, and at the end, after hope seemed extinct, was to rise again at the moment that a prosperous stroke of fortune came? You deceive yourself: but for my visit to Kemp, you would have thought of me as you have thought for nigh two years,—but for the sight again of a face which once fascinated you, all would have been forgotten, as it had been already."

"No, no! you are wrong again there. For a month before you came I discovered my own blind folly, and had I been aware that your visit would have been so long deferred, I would have come down to Bramsholme even then. O would to God I had!"

Perhaps her heart half echoed this.

Herbert then proceeded to detail to her the circumstances under which his eyes first became opened. She listened with great attention, and with more composure than she had hitherto displayed during the interview. Perhaps if ever there was a chance of her revoking her resolution, it was during this re-

cital. Her father's untruth had shaken her, and the thought that Herbert's old affection had revived actually *before* she came, and at the moment he saw the unreasonableness of his doubts, produced a relief, which might have ended well. But as he proceeded, it was impossible for her not to perceive that the sense of having acted dishonourably was the first feeling awakened; and immediately the idea seized her that until he saw her again the desire to redeem this step, and set his reputation right with his conscience, was the chief, if not the only motive, that had actuated him. It was, therefore, with a sad shake of the head that she received all he had to say on this point.

"It is of no use, Herbert," she said; "I cannot accept such a love as this discloses, in *lieu* of that which I thought I had. I should never be happy; and then you would grieve, and would soon cease to care for me at all."

A deep sadness settled on his face at this speech; he felt all hope was waning. If *his* pride had been culpable, it had yielded to conviction; while *hers* was obstinate, hardened, and rebellious. He almost told her this, though the terms he chose for conveying so sharp a truth, were gentle, persuasive, and fervid.

As he did this, she listened to him with her soft eyes affectionately raised to his face, as if anxious to hear him as indulgently as she could. But her mind had been so long made up as to the course she was to take, indeed had taken—for during her stay at Kemp, and after the settled friendly intercourse which had

come to be established between them, she had almost lived herself into the belief that the question would not be re-opened—her mind had been so long made up, that it wanted more than persuasion to shake her resolution. In answer, then, to his last speech on this new point, she only sighed and said—

"It would seem, then, that I am to believe that if you have wronged me, in the way you have allowed passion to stifle your attachment, I have acted in some similar way towards you. I wish you would convince me of that. There is no sacrifice which I would not consent to, to expiate my wrong: and it would be a happiness to me to know that I had something to be forgiven too. Only convince me of that."

But he was too noble and unselfish to attempt such a line of argument, tempting as such a course was. No, he could not do it. He said he did not mean that.

Her face fell. "I wish you could," she said. "But my conscience acquits me on that score: I never changed: no pride ever stifled my feelings, as those who saw me count the hours, and days, and weeks, after that event which placed you here, can tell." Here she was so affected as to be obliged to seek her handkerchief, to check the tears which almost blinded her. "I too had no sign, no token, for three long years; but my hope wanted no renewal — my love was ever fresh."

"Emmy!" cried Herbert, almost heart-broken.

"And you, Herbert," she continued, with her voice almost stifled with emotion, "who made promises spon-

taneously—promises which I never asked for, or wished you to make; how did you keep them? Can you blame me for testing your love by too high a standard, when that standard was fixed by your own vows?"

"Emmy!" cried Herbert, "for pity's sake spare me. I do not impute—I never did impute—to you a wrong or unfaithful thought. I see fully now what a great prize I have well-nigh lost—oh! do not make me say quite lost. I know I am not worthy of you—I know I have wronged you—but not, as you would have it, in ever ceasing to love you; but in the indulging of those wicked feelings which made me for a time consent to banish you from my thoughts. What I meant just now was this, that as a feeling of pride was my fault then, so a like feeling is now acting on you, in inducing you to repulse me. You think you have been slighted; and you are too proud to forget the slight, now that wealth and a position are yours, if you do so."

"You are mistaken. If you were, as you were on that last night at Bramsholme, when we parted, I would say the same."

"Be it so. It is not the less a feeling of pride which actuates you for all that: you are too proud to take one, humbled though he is, who has once slighted you. More even,—you cannot bear to think it said, as only the ignorant and unkind would say, that you came to Lamford without your mind being made up."

"I tried myself, Herbert, on that point before I started, and unless my mind had been made up, I certainly would not have come."

"Granted that yours is a just pride, and mine was a wicked pride," he continued rapidly; "granted that yours elevates your motives, and your decision hitherto, just as mine debases me, and shews me in my worst light: with sorrow and shame I *confess* and deny mine, while you inexorably cling to yours. Oh! Emmy, there can be no greater glory than in mortifying such a feeling: you have no reason now to indulge it, now that you know I have never ceased to love you."

"Herbert," said Emmy, again looking up, "if it were pride alone, that might be. I may be proud: I hope I have some right pride. But it is not only that; you say you have never ceased to love me: but for a time, you allow, you did cease to think of me. That has hurt me: it is not only my pride that is hurt. It has raised a doubt, which I do not know would ever be removed, of your love being quite real."

"And you are taking the step of breaking with me for good, by way of testing it: a dangerous test, Emmy, and one, if it never bring regret to you, will simply blast my life for me. For this doubt,—which I do believe one week of intercourse, such as we passed in old days, would banish from your thoughts for ever,—you will exchange every remnant of your old love, every chance of realization of hopes once dear. It may be that in days to come, a life withered and barren of good fruits, a broken wandering spirit, an eye that sees no good, and a heart dead to every ennobling influence, will tell you of the once loving soul you have cast away;" and his words, too, became inarticulate from emotion.

"Oh! leave me, leave me," said Emmy, weeping bitterly: "I told you that nothing but sorrow and despair could come of this. Oh! Herbert, leave me, or my heart will break."

"If I stay, it is not to pain you," he continued, in great distress: "I cannot tear myself away without one more appeal. Do not think me unfeeling, or insensible to your agony; but the issue, Emmy, is so terrible to me, it involves such life-long results—that—you will hear me, dear, loved Emmy, but for a few moments more. You will hear me?"

She did not answer, but wept on unconstrainedly.

"They will be my last words on the subject: I will not speak again on it, unless you bid me. There was a time when you were diffident in the opinions you formed of others, doubting continually your own judgment, and ever courting theirs in matters even of small importance. And yet this diffidence you have wholly laid aside in judging of one, who at least with all his faults deserves something at your hands."

"Oh! much, much," cried Emmy, still weeping.

"Why then assume so decidedly that my fault has arisen from inconstancy? Why doubt my affection being quite real? Again, in old days you were ever indulgent of those who had deserved but little success in their wooing. I could recall many an instance of this, which I thought weakness then. Why not give me a little of the same? Has my fault dried up that feeling in your heart too? It appears to me, that in the case of one so loved still as I am—for you see I do not question the strength and continuance of your

affection even now, against circumstances that might well make a man doubt—I say in the case of one so loved, every hard view should be relaxed, every strict rule of justice be dispensed with. But this is not so here; I have slighted you once, and you cannot keep yourself from fearing that I may do so again, even though I have shewn you that the slight was partly the result of a mistake, and a deceit which—but forgive me, I should have passed over that. What can I say to move you? Emmy, I shall know no joy again, if you cast me from you. Oh! in the name of those old days when our hearts were one; in the name of that last night, when you told me you knew all would come right—make yourself now a true prophet. For the sake of your own long fidelity and truth now so holy in my eyes, restore me to that place in your bosom which was once my own."

There was a silence; for Herbert could not go on. Hardly master of himself, he let his head fall on the back of that chair behind which he had stood during this interview, while the tears broke from *his* eyes.

Neither spoke for some minutes. The scene was a sad one. The bright flowing flowers without in the conservatory hard by, sparkling in colour and beauty, the one little crushed and beaten flower within, drooping in contrast to her prouder fellows; the bright blaze of the sun gladdening green lanes and yellow fields, the blithesome birds joyous with song without, and the two stricken ones with their riven hearts and streaming eyes within. True type of earth's journey! a path of flowers and sunshine strewn with scenes of woe and misconduct!

Emmy was the first to break silence. She said in a tone scarcely above her breath, "Herbert!"

He did not answer, but raised his head.

"Herbert," she continued, in a voice that would have been inaudible to any one, but to a person in a state of nervous excitement like himself; "I do not pretend to having been right in my judgment of everything connected with what has passed. Perhaps even on those points on which my opinion is unchanged, I err. But my mind has been made up in no haste: I have had time, too much alas, to reflect on what has happened. Before I came down here, I both reflected and consulted others on what course I ought to pursue, in case it should so happen, though I did not then think it likely, that you would be attracted to me again; and I would not have come at all, had I not weighed deliberately and impartially every feeling likely to influence me. Don't think that I would hesitate now for that reason to change my course, if I repented. No false shame shall induce me in any case to trifle with my happiness, and I will even yet, though it be too late, let you know, should I find that I have been deceived in myself. But as yet, Herbert, I see no sign of that. Deeply do I grieve that you were told an untruth, and at the hands of one so near and dear to me. But that one was not I; I sent you no token; but I left you one, and even had that been withdrawn, after your promises your conduct could not stand excused. Pardon me, I do not mean to reproach. All this I pass by; all this I forgive. It is not the act done that sways me, it is the state of your heart that caused you so to act, which I feel. One

influence,—call it pride, or what you will,—excuse it, and plead for it as you will,—one influence was sufficient to—you say not to extinguish your love for me —at all events to place it in abeyance. *One* influence where *every one* should have been powerless, was sufficient to banish me from your hopes, if not from your heart. Perhaps I am proud, but should I have been worthy of that feeling which I once excited, if I too did not banish you—not from my heart, Herbert! Oh, God, no, never, but—from my hopes too? It was a duty I owed to my self-respect. This I did, and it is now some months since I ceased to think of you as anything else, but as a dear, very dear brother; this I hope to do to my dying day; but the PAST is gone, and if I were to try and recall it, it would not come, but would only send instead a PRESENT of a different kind. The case would have been otherwise, had you first seen and wooed me now. But you wooed me with all your heart, and were we now to be united, I should after the past three years feel that I had only a part of it. The love you offer now, I never could believe the same as that which I thought I had then.

"One word more. I fear I am tedious as well as incoherent; but just one word more, and we must part. Circumstances have widely altered since you were at Bramsholme: and in this is my one comfort in your behalf. When we used to speak of the fortune which was to enable us to marry, we meant competence, and no more; with that, and that alone, I should, perhaps, have adorned, as well as have blessed your home. But as it has happened, and fortune has turned out to mean wealth and station, I feel

that Providence has dealt wisely in keeping us apart. I am no wife for the owner of that proud park. I should never do you justice in the society in which you are destined to move. Here around you are others far more fitted for your hand; I might name one, beautiful, noble-hearted, and who loves you."

"Oh! cruel, cruel, Emmy," said Herbert.

"I do not mean to be cruel, indeed I do not: I would see you happy, and I would, if I might, call your wife my friend."

Herbert raised his head, and for the first time changed his position. He had hitherto remained at some distance from Emmy behind the chair before mentioned. He now moved towards her. He spoke, when close to her, in a deep tone of melancholy exceedingly painful.

"Adieu, then, Emmy, and God be with you! Only, however ill you may have thought of me before, grant me one last favour, never to think of me as the property of any other woman: I ask it as a last indulgence. Henceforth my life, even though it be a short one, will be one long widowhood. Yes, Emmy, you have widowed my heart. You have been there, my all, far more beloved since my fault, if possible, than before; and now by tearing yourself from me, you leave me bereaved and forlorn. So be it; the weeds shall be worn dank, long, and coarse, in solitude, and in crowd, to denote the arid soil which can produce no better fruit——."

"Oh! say not so, for mercy's sake," cried Emmy, throwing up her arms in one wild burst of grief at these words. "I cannot bear to think of that; oh!

say not that; Herbert, dear, say not so;" and for once, but for a moment, and for the last time, she fell upon his breast, and he clasped her with a thrill of joy and agony to his heart. The noise of some one approaching was heard. With one kiss upon her pale cheek, the last and sweetest in his dream of love, he was gone, and she in a flood of passionate sobs, cast her face and hands upon the table before her.

It would have melted a heart of stone to have beheld her so. Much more did it melt that of Christina Percy, who, entering noiselessly by the conservatory, had witnessed the close of this scene. Whatever pang shot through her own heart at the little she had beheld, that was forgotten in a moment. The grief and agony of the poor girl before her usurped every sympathy, banished every selfish thought. Hastening to her, she threw herself on her knees beside her, and tried to raise her half-recumbent form.

"Miss Melton—Mignonette—Emmy, be composed. For gracious sake don't take on in this way."

For some minutes no effect seemed produced, but Christina continuing her solicitude, and varying it by every conceivable expression of endearment, even to the dropping of her own tears as well, Emmy's grief became a little less violent, but her hysterical sobs still continued, and seemed to tear her very frame as they found vent.

"Emmy, dear, try again," said Christina.

"Call me not Emmy," said the poor girl, looking up with a wild look in the speaker's face, while her sobs seemed to cease for a moment to give her power of utterance. "Call me not Emmy: 'Call me Mara,

for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me;' "—and her sobs returned afresh.

"Hush!" said Christina: "I hear Madame d'Aulaincourt's voice. Don't be hasty, Emmy. Say nothing at present of what has passed, until you have collected yourself. I will say nothing."

Poor Emmy did not know what she had to say, though she gathered from this that Christina had been witness of part of the late scene.

Madame d'Aulaincourt and Cecile here entered, and were considerably surprised, as well they might be, at the state in which they found Mignonette.

"I found Miss Melton indulging in such a fit of hysterics, Madame d'Aulaincourt," said Christina.

"My poor dear child!" said the kind-hearted lady, coming up and caressing Emmy, "it must be the intense heat. I never felt anything so hot in my life. Cecile! fetch me the sal-volatile from my room. I thought you were looking pale this morning, my dear. Come, you must not give way so."

"I think, if she were to lie down for a little," said Christina. Emmy signified by a gesture that that was just what she would like. Madame d'Aulaincourt hailed the proposition as a marvel of sagacity, and in a short time the ailing girl was up-stairs on her bed, with the windows darkened.

Poor Mignon! And was not this widowhood for her heart, too?

CHAPTER V.

FRUIT WITHERED.

The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. The brightness of our life is gone. Shadows of evening fall around us, and the world seems but a dim reflection,—itself a broader shadow. We look forward into the coming lovely night. The soul withdraws into itself. Then stars arise, and the night is holy.—LONGFELLOW.

AND Wall-flower? When the windows of *her* imagination were darkened also, so as to shut out all external influences, just as were Emmy's, in the tranquillity and obscurity of her chamber; and when she, too, could look into her own heart, and ask what had happened there since it had witnessed the closing act of that scene,—what were Wall-flower's feelings? Were we dealing with the case of any ordinary woman, the question would not be difficult to answer. Bitter disappointment, then humiliation, then pride, then, perhaps, anger at having been so deceived—perhaps, also, animosity against the poor girl who had so robbed her heart of its best blood,—these would be the feelings, the existence of which, at all events, we might have to record.

But Wall-flower, though she, perhaps, resembled many another woman in the impulses and passions which fell to her share, differed from most in the fact, that for years she had subjected herself to a course of moral discipline, in respect of all such impulses,

which caused them to act in a precisely different way to which they most often do in the female heart. Christina Percy had, in her time, been no stranger to disappointment, and this had taught her that there is nothing in life which she ought not to try and bear, if it is hard to bear. Now in acting up to such a course of duty, she had found it necessary absolutely to turn her back upon all those sensations of anger or sorrow which present disappointment or sense of injury are apt to give birth to in the breast. The sense of having been wronged was one that she literally fled from, from a fear that it might deceive her into feeling that she had suffered a blow which she could not support. She never permitted herself to think of the blow itself until she was so far used to the knowledge that it had fallen, to be able to canvass it in all its bearings, dispassionately.

With so generous a heart, and such high, affectionate sensitiveness, no doubt she could have felt agony in its most poignant form; but she never allowed herself to feel it at all until other higher and nobler impulses had been excited in behalf of the cause which she might, without them, have been driven to oppose. She disarmed the stroke that fell upon herself, by cultivating sympathy for the arm that aimed it.

And so in the instance we have been relating, though the pang which shot through her heart at witnessing the close of that interview between Emmy and Herbert, went home cruelly and relentlessly, she closed up the wound, as it were, and seized upon that other sensation of pity and sympathy which sug-

gested itself for the broken flower before her, as if it were a charm to guard her from a false and delusive snare.

But the hours passed by, and Christina, being at home and left to herself, thought she might approach and take the veil from off her heart which she had cast thereon, and might just peep and see what was within.

The first reflection she thought proper to indulge was as to what she really had seen, and whether it meant anything so dangerous to her peace as she first took for granted that it did. She approached it sadly, with a caution to herself, as if she then distrusted the result conveyed in repeating gently those words of Longfellow's,—

> "Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
> Behind the clouds is the sun still shining:
> Thy fate is the common fate of all,
> Into each life some rain must fall,
> Some days must be dark and dreary."

And a tear, slow, resigned, and soft, fell down that ruddy cheek,—the only one—for herself!

Oh, fellow-men! think of this with me in our trials,—we who get restive, the more we should get accustomed,—we who have such resource for comfort, which gentle, uncomplaining woman has not,—we who take joy as our right, and cast the dregs of its cup, too often, to them who by rights should have tasted first, if not have had the whole.

What had she witnessed? Little more than this, —that Emmy and Herbert had once loved,—that for some reason, which she could not fathom, they were parted, and for good; and that that parting had been

against Emmy's wishes, else why should she have said, "Call me not Emmy,—call me Mara?" Yes, something had taken place to make Herbert Capel break the tie; hence all his uneasiness since Mignonette's arrival,—and this was the result. He had done it that morning; perhaps had told her he would keep his promise and marry her, but that it would be without his love. And then came the question, for whom had he done this? Ah me! oh snare! oh delusion! away with it!—and with grief and shame she hid her burning face in her hands, for she knew it was the tempter saying, "Perchance it was for thee!"

Then flew Christina to that ample resource which she knew was in her heart. All her pity, all her sympathy for the suffering girl, awoke afresh, and with it contempt for him who had cast that young love aside. Even that cruel feeling was better than a snare which could only offer her own wicked benefit for its result. Poor suffering Emmy! deserted! Oh, that word; how often does it apply in this world to poor, loving, trusting woman! We have no need to go to the lowly and the abased for the truth of that; but even in our own rank let us look to the list of matches broken off by so-called consent, if you will have it so. How often is woman in truth, though not in common parlance, deserted!

The reader knows as well as we, that in Mignonette's case this was not so. With her the desertion *had* been and was past, and it was only by her own consent that its results were now fully realized. But Christina was not as yet aware of this; and she was

but too glad to take refuge in a mistaken apprehension of circumstances, in order to escape from feelings which might lead her to look for happiness to herself in another's woe.

"Emmy was deserted," she thought; "and if deserted for her, should she ever dream of wearing the crown which had been woven for that younger and paler brow? and at his hands, too — the one who had so deceived? Bickerton might for a lifetime want a mistress ere that should happen. No; that idea must be torn from her heart—torn for ever!" And yet it must not be supposed that Christina did not feel the demolition of her prospects. They really did touch her most severely, but she had the moral courage not to dwell upon them, and though moments of forlorn and weary hopelessness did on this, as on other occasions, force themselves on her spirits, her grief never came to her in the tangible shape of a lover's infidelity, or a home and a heart lost. Perhaps the strongest chord which is struck in hearts like hers, is the being robbed of something in which they feel an interest; and when this happens more than once, it is apt to have a sensation of weariness of everything and of everybody in life. "I should not care," she once said to a dear friend, "if I had something to interest me now at the present time,—with such an interest as would carry me on to look into the future; but I have not that,—I do not see that I ever shall, and so I am weary." A hard conclusion for one who had spent her life in denying herself all that could interest her, for the sake of others' happiness.

The day in question had been intensely hot; and during it Christina had remained at home. Dispirited through feeling more for her fellow-sufferer than for herself, she had eluded every attempt of Bella Dillwyn, and others who called, to draw her out. Part of the time she had passed in going through her ordinary daily avocations, though listlessly enough, and the other part in trying her own fortitude by re-enacting some of the thoughts we have so imperfectly jotted down. Two ideas were fixed in her mind: the first, that she was to think no more of Herbert Capel; the second, that she was to try and comfort the unhappy girl he had so misused. But on this latter point she was by no means sure she should have much opportunity of exercising her powers. It was very possible that Emmy would say no more to her or any one else on the subject. She had so long kept the whole of her engagement a secret, even from others who knew her better than she, Christina, that a similar course of proceeding was by no means unlikely. Christina felt this,—it was a most disheartening anticipation. What chance had she of not thinking of herself, if she were deprived of all chance of thinking of and caring for that other? There was this hope, to be sure. She had witnessed what others had not; she was a participator in a part of Emmy's grief: what more probable than that the latter should seek her confidence by telling her of the remainder, and by explaining that which she had already seen? This was no idle curiosity; it was the working of a restless heart, anxiously seeking to relieve, as well as to be relieved.

The day had passed; it was sunset. Christina, thinking that Emmy might by this time have rallied from the blow that had fallen, resolved on strolling up in the cool of the evening to Kemp, to see how she was. It could hardly be called the cool of the evening, after all, for though the extreme heat of the sun had abated, the air hung heavy and oppressive on every tree, and bush, and blade of grass. Kemp stood higher than Lamford,—it might be cooler there; so off she went. She passed the well-known gate, and through the shrubbery. She hesitated as she looked at the conservatory; that entrance to the house she thought she could never try again. While she was hesitating, the gardener accosted her, saying that the ladies were on the terrace which overlooked the ruin. Christina went thither, and was welcomed by all three. Emmy alone of them was seated. She seemed to have recovered from her attack in the morning, so to speak, and was there to get the little cool air there was. There was something striking in her appearance as she sat before Christina. She was in a very light evening dress, which sat so carelessly on her, that, joined to the lace handkerchief which was tied round her head, it gave her in the half-waning light an appearance somewhat aerial. The dark hair contrasted more darkly with the fantastic, improvised head-dress, and again with this more forcibly the transparent pallor of her countenance. In their turn, too, the rich soft eyes seemed sparkling with more than their usual soft persuasiveness, and the whole figure had an unreality about it which went to Christina's heart.

"Oh, Christina!" said Madame d'Aulaincourt, "we

have been so wishing to see you: Emmy has been crying out for you ever since she awoke."

Christina's heart leaped at that. "Why did you not send for me?" she replied; and then to Emmy, "Are you better?"

"Much better," said Emmy, extending her hand, and smiling one of her sweetest smiles; "I have only got a little headache left."

"You must join your persuasion to ours, Christina, to make her take care of her little headache, as she calls it," said Madame d'Aulaincourt: "after such an attack as that of this morning, she ought not to be allowed to play tricks with herself. Perhaps you will stay and reason her out of joining this Mouse Island excursion she has set her mind upon for the day after to-morrow."

"You surely do not think of going to that," said Christina, wondering how she *could* go, headache, or no headache, after what had passed.

"You shall be my duenna, Miss Percy," said Emmy, persuasively; "you shall see that I don't over-exert myself."

Christina wondered more and more.

"Emmy wants to speak to you, I believe, Christina," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, "so we will leave you alone. I have some orders to give in-doors. When I have done, I will send Cecile back, and then I think you had better come in, as it will be getting late. Come, Cecile."

"You want to speak to me," said Christina, when Madame d'Aulaincourt and her daughter were out of ear-shot.

"I wanted you to execute a commission for me, if you would, Miss Percy," said Emmy, in a low, tremulous tone.

"I certainly will not, if you ever call me Miss Percy again," replied Christina, taking a vacant garden-chair that was hard by, and seating herself near her: "call me Christina;" and she placed her face close to Emmy's, which the latter affectionately kissed, as if fully realizing the meaning contained in the action.

"Poor child!" said Christina, gently.

After a pause, Emmy went on in the same low tone: "What I want to ask you has reference to—this morning; and as you were in some way—I do not know how far—witness of a very painful scene, I thought you might not object to——"

"Of course! I shall be only too glad to assist you in any way I can," replied the other, quickly, in order to help the speaker in what seemed difficult of expression: "but are you strong enough to talk on this matter to-night?"

"Of what I have to speak, it is necessary that I should speak to-night: of the rest, if you will let me, we will talk another time."

"I hope you will neither speak now, nor at any other time, of more than you are quite sure you would like," said Christina, tenderly: "I wish to be your friend, Emmy, your dear friend. But you must not think that I desire to know your secrets, unless you are certain you would like me for a *confidante*."

Christina regarded Emmy's pale face as she spoke, and perceived that she could not trust herself to answer. Her eyes were cast down, and from the ex-

pression of her mouth, the teeth within seemed to be set fast, as if from some great emotion. At last she looked up with a sweet melting smile, which said plainer than words could say, "I intend you to know all."

"What can I do now?" pursued Christina.

"While I was asleep this afternoon, Mr. Motcombe called, and left with the servant a note for me: it was from Herb——; I mean Mr. ——"

"I understand," said Christina.

"The note," continued Emmy, falteringly, "was to tell me that he had made arrangements to excuse himself from the party to Mouse Island, in order that I should be there with Cecile; and it wished me to signify my approval, or the reverse, of this course. I have done so in this letter," (producing another,) "which I thought you would not object to let him have."

Christina looked astonished, but seeing that Emmy was half-disappointed, hastened to reply: "I do not see how *I* am to let him have it; I am not in his secrets, Emmy,—and," more warmly, "I do not wish to be."

Emmy's countenance fell.

"But Mr. Motcombe is in them, that is quite clear, by his bringing that note here. Why do you not enclose it under cover to him?"

"I do not see how I can manage it," answered Emmy, despondently: "You see, nobody in the house knew of *his* coming; and the note was delivered so much as a matter of course, that the servant who received it made no remark upon it. If I were to send

this one, I should have to explain both that I had received the other, and also to give some excuse for my answering it so hurriedly. You see I am not going to stay here long, Christina, and I do not wish to burden either Cecile or her mother with my griefs."

"Of course not," returned Christina: "I think I can help you. Supposing you enclose that under cover to Mr. Motcombe, I will manage that he shall have it early in the morning."

"I am so much obliged," said Emmy, gratefully; "you have taken a great load off my mind."

"And now, Emmy," said Christina, "you must be a good child, and dismiss these sad topics from your mind for the present. When you like—to-morrow, or any other day—I will come and see you, and you can talk to me as you please, or not."

"Not to-morrow," said Emmy, sadly; "to-morrow I must write to mamma. On the next day, if you like, at the picnic, we will ramble away together, while the others are boating and amusing themselves. I am told there are some wonderful woods."

"Very well, then; so be it," replied Christina: "Meantime, you must not excite yourself; not even by writing sad letters."

"No," said Emmy; "I shall only write to mamma." She rose as she said this, and stretching her joined hands downwards away from her, as if they were weary and stiff, she drew up her figure and seemed to be gazing into the night, as at some far-off object. "Only to mamma."

"Poor Emmy!" said Christina, "how I pity you!"

"Oh! pity not me," she replied, now raising her

head, and gazing into the heavens: "pity him,—pity and pray for him,—that he may have resignation to bow, and strength to bear. Christina, your prayers are the prayers of a good and true heart: offer them for him, for he needs them,—oh! so needs them."

"Does he deserve prayers?"

"I cannot name the number of them which he does not deserve," she replied, turning her face with a tearful smile towards the speaker.

Surprised as Christina was at this information, she was not less astonished at the singular beauty of Mignonette's appearance at this moment: and she wondered now how she could have questioned its existence for an instant. That exquisite figure, displaying each grace more remarkably from their minuteness, was striking enough. But the face, so small, so childish in the simplicity of each feature, seemed now invested with an animation almost unearthly. The soft dark eyes glittering with tears, which reflected back the stars to which they were upturned,—the half-open mouth displaying the peerless curl of the short upper lip, and as if uttering a prayer at this moment,—the small rounded chin, all set off by the handkerchief which encircled them, filled Christina with an admiration amounting almost to awe.

What will not a god-like thought make of the tamest face! And Emmy's was not a tame face.

"Emmy, my prayers shall join yours,—I promise: only you must come in now."

Emmy turned, and for a moment rested her head on the elder girl's bosom; then, leaning partly on her arm, turned her footsteps towards the house.

* * * * *

Much about the same time, and, as the crow flies, not very far from the spot, sat also on another lawn two gentlemen. We need hardly say who they were; nor that the place indicated was the well-kept turf of the gardens at Bickerton. Strangely enough, they were both looking in the same direction as the girls had been. Ever since Herbert had opened out the view in front of the library windows, so as to command also a glimpse of the monastery, both he and Dacre had taken to sitting outside the house of evenings on that particular spot. So that when Emmy was gazing out into the night, invoking a prayer on his head, he was also looking in the same direction, thinking of her in her affliction. Here, at Bickerton, little seemed to be passing in the way of conversation between Herbert and his companion. The latter was, as usual, smoking, and now and then casting a sidelong look of pity on the former, who, tilting his chair, had the right foot thrown up carelessly on his left knee, and was flogging it listlessly with a small cane. He had, apparently, but just unburdened himself of the events of the morning, and his manly but hopeless way of recounting them was probably the cause of the other's silence. In appearance, Herbert was much as usual, except that the paleness of his face evidenced, in some degree, a struggle undergone. After a silence of some duration, Dacre said, "And what do you propose doing now?"

Herbert shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

"I would not go: the little maid will go herself shortly," said his friend.

"I could not go as long as she remained here, unless she wished it," replied Herbert.

"Ah! but for that reason, which is mere weakness, I should say you ought to go."

"Never mind reasons," said Herbert: "if we both agree that I ought to stay, it matters little our differing as to the why."

"I don't at all approve of your staying away from the party, Capel."

"I should only be in the way, under present circumstances," was the reply.

"That may be, as far as Miss Melton is concerned; and in reference to her, I think you have acted both delicately and wisely: but your presence would give a respectability to it, which is really wanted, when those young men are to be present."

"There will be yourself and old Harbottle."

"I shall be fishing, and old Harbottle will be asleep."

"And what might not I be doing? rambling with one party or another? My dear Dacre, if the presence of the senior and his wife, and Mrs. Deane, and I do not know who else, is not sufficient to give respectability to the thing, we had better bespeak one of the county police."

There was a sort of bitter humour in this reply which well shewed the state of his temper.

"Well, that may be all very true," said Dacre, making a wry face; "but if anything were to go wrong, you would never forgive yourself."

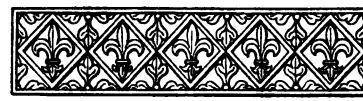
Herbert did not heed this remark, but jumping up, cried, "There is Harry Motcombe," who was seen on the other side of the ha-ha, slowly walking across the park towards them.

To do Dacre justice, he really sympathized with

Herbert's sorrow as much as a friend could; but he did not understand how to bend that plastic nature, and he was powerless, therefore, as a comforter.

When Christina Percy found herself suffering under some cruel blow, it was her custom to go and visit some of the suffering poor in her neighbourhood. "It did her good," she said, "and taught her how vain and puny were her troubles in comparison with those with which the Almighty has thought proper to afflict some of the weakest of humanity;" and this recipe for a wounded soul she tried on Mignonette the very next day succeeding the evening of which we are writing. It was a wholesome medicine,—for it taught a lesson while it administered a balm.

Edwin Dacre was not a whit the less sympathetic when he said to Herbert in his affliction, "Try a pipe;" but he did not know his patient, as did Christina; nor had he so fully studied the pathology of a suffering heart: and yet he was as religious, more practical, and his heart was as large.



CHAPTER VI.

CONFIDENCES.

I would not be a woman like the rest,—
A simple woman, that believes in love,
And owns the right of love, because she loves,
And hearing she is lov'd is satisfied.

AURORA LEIGH, *by Mrs. Browning.*

LOUD was the outcry and manifold were the regrets which met the announcement, on the morning of the excursion, that Mr. Capel was precluded by important business from being present. It had carefully been kept secret until most of the party had assembled, and none were therefore prepared for the untoward circumstance, excepting Miss Melton and Miss Percy among the ladies, and Edwin Dacre among the gentlemen. This latter conveyed the news in his matter-of-fact manner, characteristically divesting himself of any shadow of suspicion of participating in the proceeding. In answer to all enquiries, he gave the same answer,—"Capel says that he is precluded from coming by important business."

"But what business, Mr. Dacre?" cried one.

"You must ask him."

"Why could he not put it off till to-morrow?" says another.

"You really must apply to him for an answer."

"Or why could he not have let us know last

night? I am sure we would willingly have waited a day."

"I really must refer you to him, to explain himself."

The younger gentlemen were not so unanimous in regret at his absence. Wordsworth whispered, in his nervous English, that it was 'beastly unlike a gentleman,'—though he was secretly delighted at the occurrence; and Arthur Deane, while bewailing to Miss Melton, in his most piercing tones, his sorrow for what he called a cloud over the sunshine of the feast, was devising schemes in his particularly unfruitful brain to turn the circumstance to his own account.

But if the sun was obscured, as he said, it was obscured for himself in a different way to what he meant. Emmy, on the present occasion, gave his witticisms no encouragement; indeed, so evidently evinced distaste to his attentions, that Wordsworth, his bosom friend, laughed outright. "What shall I do, Ned?" said the simple-hearted dragoon, taking the friend into a shady nook just before dinner.

"Why, just play her off at her own game, man," replied the astute friend; "shew her that you don't care for her; flirt furiously with the little Dillwyn, or with that bold French girl, who would laugh with anybody, and you will have her at your feet before sun-down."

And Arthur followed his advice,—for which, no doubt, Emmy would have thanked the giver from her heart, had she known it was his; for it enabled her to pass most of the day alone in Christina's company.

No one else interfered with her, for it was understood she had been ill, and was still suffering.

The party, as has been already hinted, was the party of Cecile d'Aulaincourt, who, under the care and supervision of Mrs. Deane, made a very charming, *naïve*, and attractive young hostess. Everything that Bickerton could afford, even to the taste of the owner, had been lavished on this little party. The best band that could be procured at a short notice had been quartered at a reasonable distance on the opposite side of the river, to give zest to the day. Capel would have done anything for the family at Kemp; and the present festivity had been his care for the past fortnight.

The "Mouse," as it was commonly called, from some supposed resemblance in shape to the animal of that name, was a large wooded island in the middle of the river Ouse, in front of, and belonging to, the Bickerton estate. The river divides—it is hardly necessary to say—on meeting it, into one deep channel and into one rapid one; and at their confluence the two form one fine sheet of water for nearly a mile, when the stream again becomes shallow and rapid, opposite a farm called Lepp Farm. Here Dacre was to fish on the day in question. Of the party itself, some proceeded to Bickerton in carriages, while others crossed the park on ponies, donkeys, or on foot, until they reached the river, when they were ferried over by two punts, provided for that purpose, to the "Mouse," across the deep arm of the stream. Others again, who preferred it, proceeded by the high road on the right bank, and were transferred to the

"Mouse" by the rapid arm. Others were hardy enough to join Edward Wordsworth and Arthur Deane at Lamm's Ferry, and to take the sailing-boat, the "Folly," which these gentlemen had chartered, to their destination.

A large number of the park party, before crossing to the "Mouse," proceeded on foot to see Dacre commence fishing, a mile below. Of these were Cecile, Emmy, and Christina, with Mrs. Deane and Mr. Hetherington. The weather was beautiful; a fresh breeze rippled the face of the water, and soon brought down the "Folly" and her party, in gallant style, to the same spot. Everybody admired Dacre's skill and his success; but it was remarked, that after the arrival of the sailing craft his hand "got out," and he could not strike his fish. The reason of this afterwards became apparent, when he joined the party before dinner, and thus addressed Christina and Emmy, in presence of Colonel Deane.

"Miss Percy, I have a great respect for your sense; but as you are at a picnic, and may, like other folk, have left a portion of it at home, may I take the liberty of suggesting some wholesome advice?"

"Certainly; but you must not look so serious, or I shall think I have put my dress on wrong side out, at least."

"No, no!" said Dacre; "and it is for Miss Melton as well, and the Colonel, too, if he thinks it worth having.—Pray do not trust yourselves, on any account, in that sailing *thing*: the wind is getting fresher, and though it will not be enough to make

waves on this stream, those gentlemen do not know how to handle the boat,—that is all!"

This was a rap on the Colonel's sore place,—his vanity as to his son's skill; and he coloured like a schoolboy at a rebuke which, it struck him, came very ill from a person of Mr. Dacre's youth. So twitching up his shirt-collars,—it is wonderful, by-the-bye, what a fuss military men make of these appendages after they have retired from service, and have taken systematically to wearing them,—and settling his chin, he said "He thought *that* a rather thoughtless remark of Mr. Dacre's, and calculated to disturb the harmony of a very well-arranged party. It appeared to him that the little sailing-boat was not only carefully, but exceedingly well managed; he might say, as a man who had seen much yachting in his time, exceedingly well managed."

"Remember, Colonel," said Dacre, who was not to be deterred from giving wholesome advice because an old gentleman was huffed about his son,—"remember, Colonel, that landsmen in sailing skiffs on rivers are not sailors in yachts at sea."

"Again let me repeat," said the Colonel, "before these ladies, that these remarks do no honour to Mr. Dacre's judgment. They would not have fallen from Mr. Herbert Capel, had he been here."

"I would undertake to say, that if Herbert Capel were here," said Dacre, "not a lady in this party would enter that *sailing thing* to-day."

The Colonel was too much annoyed to reply, and walked away in dudgeon; in which state he remained

for nearly ten minutes; when his anger was diverted by a counter-irritation at discovering Mr. Harbottle senior again asleep in a shady position, with his head in a salad-bowl.

Christina and Emmy, however, thought Dacre's advice excellent, though ever so brusquely given, and therefore, after dinner, when an excursion in the "sailing thing" was proposed, they declined, and being set on shore in one of the punts, proceeded to explore some of the beautiful woods which overhung the Bickerton side of the river, and to have that little conversation of which we have already spoken in the last chapter.

Of the gentlemen, old Harbottle and the Colonel, who had by this time made it up with the former, devoted themselves to the noble art of bottom-fishing, of which the latter knew about as much as his son did of rigging a frigate. Hetherington devoted himself to Bella Dillwyn, the elder ladies, and the Miss Trenthams, in the latter part of which Walter Harbottle was associated;—all this on the island. Lester Harbottle joined Dacre down at Lepp; while Cecile d'Aulaincourt (with the permission of Mrs. Deane), two Miss Harbottles and Nora Deane, consigned themselves to the care of Messrs. Wordsworth and Arthur Deane, in their management of that maligned craft the "Folly."

Christina and Emmy, after descending the left bank of the river for about half a mile, soon found themselves in a wood just suited to their fancy, and ascending the declivity on which it lay, found a grassy seat, commanding part of the broad expanse of water be-

low, from which the voices of the boating party could be distinctly heard. They themselves were screened from observation by the thick foliage of the trees, which allowed them to catch glimpses of the water in patches only, unless they stood up in particular spots to do so. Although they could hear much of what was said from below, and in particular when Cecile d'Aulaincourt's clear, ringing voice separated itself from the party, their own were out of ear-shot of the others; and there they remained for a time, listening and enjoying, but saying little themselves. There was a considerable breeze, as we have said before, but the weather was not so cool as that their elevated position did not bring relief after the atmosphere below, which, on the afternoon of a sunny day in August, is of course susceptible of a good deal of improvement. By degrees, as they became more silent, and Christina, in several slight ways, began to caress the little girl by her side, the promise which Emmy had given two nights before, at Kemp, could not fail to rise before the minds of both. Christina made no allusion to it, but Emmy, ashamed to think that she was afraid to begin the subject, made at last a bold push at that confidence which she had herself first volunteered. After a kind caution from the elder not to be led into telling more than she liked, Emmy in her simplest manner commenced her narrative with Herbert's arrival at Bramsholme. It is not necessary for us to follow her through it, having been over that ground pretty well already. It will be enough for us to say that the points she put most prominently forward were her own full expectation that Herbert

would come to her after his succession to Bickerton —her own deep love for him, which Christina gathered more from her manner than from any particular statement—and the steady and deliberate line of duty and self-respect which had induced her to act, in the conclusion of it, as she had done. There were some points which Christina did not understand from her narrative—such as *all* the motives which had guided Herbert, and the whole conduct of Mr. Melton in the business, which last Emmy, as his daughter, naturally touched on as gently as she in justice could. But these were matters she might easily learn afterwards; and her naturally strong intellect quickly grasped from the recital, such as it was, the real nature of the case. The two lovers had each ruined their prospects by the same fault—a false pride. Herbert had done so in the first instance, because he chose to believe *his* love had been slighted; Emmy was doing so at this very moment, when her lover was willing to make every amends in his power, from precisely the same reason.

A secret glow of delight pervaded the listener's frame, as she saw arise before her a line of self-sacrifice and disinterestedness such as never before had fallen to her lot to dream of even. This loving young couple must be brought together—must be made to see their folly—must be made happy, and by her, Christina, who till now had thought herself the sole obstacle to their happiness. What would she not do for such a *denouément* to all this sorrow! She would go on her knees to Emmy, she thought, to bring it about. She seemed quite to have forgotten her own loss in this consideration—it had, as it were,

faded in a moment from her recollection that she had as good as loved this very man herself! Perhaps the discovery of this two days previously, with the sudden curb of self-control she had then put upon herself, had prepared her in a great measure for this present revulsion of feeling. However, so it was. She saw with a glance this vista of happiness ruined by a fatal self-deceit: it roused all her sympathies; it must not be; she must set this matter right. But even with all her delight at this new hope, she could not but perceive that it would be no easy task. The whole course of her thoughts, which we have been thus tediously following out, passed through her mind in less time than it would take to speak them. She lost not one word of Emmy's hesitating tale meanwhile. And though the latter at times faltered, and even stopped, to prevent being mastered by her emotions, not a word of her recital could lead to the belief that she regretted, or even doubted the wisdom of, the step she had taken. Nay, more, there was a firmness about that part of the tale which contrasted in a marked degree with the earlier parts, namely, those which recalled the memory of those days that could never come again. So that Christina saw full well she should have to feel her ground step by step, and that least of all must she let Emmy have a glimpse of her real intention in any line of reasoning she might bring to bear upon her. As far as she could see at present, her course would be to convince her that, in some way, she had misjudged her lover, and so to leave her sense of justice to plead for him, in case he should speak again. It was perhaps with this view that she at once shaped

her remarks, when it became her turn to speak; and she certainly, in a great measure, felt what she said. She most assuredly did not think that Herbert had been so much to blame as Emmy thought, or, at all events, that his fault was beyond pardon. For three long years he had been separated from her. What had been his infidelity? Not in loving another—not even, when wealth was his, in preparing to place another in her room. He had simply taken umbrage at a mistake. Besides this, Christina found something in his conduct which, had she been in Emmy's position, would have been flattering to her *amour propre*—namely, his irritation at her shewing him no sign of affection. There was that of noble in his passion, that he was proud of it; and this would have pleased Christina's bold nature. How differently do women love, or what a different homage do they expect for their love! Little, quiet, patient, Mignonette, whom one would have thought would have endured everything of time, distance, adversity unchanged, expected, on her side, a devotion such as a despot only would exact from his slave.

"Well, Emmy dear," said Christina, at the close of the narrative, "I suppose I must say something; though now that all is past, there is little enough comfort which I can find. May I say one thing, which I think?"

"I wish you to speak as unreservedly as I have done," said Emmy.

"Well, I think you must have a wonderful deal of resolution to have withstood his appeal," continued Christina; "and such an appeal as it must have been."

She could just fancy she saw Herbert making it. "I do not think I could have done so."

"Remember, I had long thought over it—in those long, long hours when he did not come."

"Exactly; and when the sense of his neglect was the most poignant."

"Do not call it neglett," said Emmy, with a sigh; "it was worse than neglect."

"Yes, but I do call it neglect," said Christina, firmly; "because it was precisely that, and no more. You would not do a worthy man an injustice, Emmy!"

"You surely do not think I have," said Emmy, quickly.

"Why n-o—no," replied Christina, who felt that this was dangerous ground: "I meant rather that, now that this matter is all over, you would be glad to think as well of him as you can."

"I never can think ill of him," said Emmy, warmly.

"I feel that," returned Christina; "and therefore you will not mind my just putting his fault in a somewhat better light—that is, in the light in which it strikes me, if I do so not to plead the cause of one already judged, but simply to enable you to think more kindly of him than ever."

"Oh, no! I shall be so glad, if you will."

"Well, then, I call his fault neglect, and neglect only. You called it, when you were speaking of it, inconstancy; but it is not inconstancy, Emmy. The inconstant lover is he who replaces the loved one by another. Mr. Capel simply got huffed,—very silly and very wicked, perhaps; but if a man is inconstant every time he becomes that, a pretty set of husbands

we women are booked for. You say he cast you from his heart; he says he never did. And how can you prove that he did, unless you have evidence that he placed there some one else instead? As I understand it, there is not a shadow of a pretence for supposing this, nor even that he was paying attentions to any one else, is there?"

Emmy looked up quickly:—"It was said that he was paying attention to you, Christina."

Christina could hardly keep her countenance at this blunt remark, and, for her cause's sake, devoutly hoped that she was not going to blush; her ready wit, however, stood her friend.

"It is hardly necessary for me to shew that all that is mere Lamford gossip, Emmy, or I should not be now taking his part: besides, you did not hear that until you came to Kemp, and you have already said that your judgment of his conduct, as well as your decision as to your own course of action, was definitely settled before you left home."

"Forgive me; I meant nothing by what I said," replied Emmy.

"Then I may go on with my argument," pursued Christina. "There is no pretence for shewing that Mr. Capel, for the three years in question, ever thought of any other girl. To call him inconstant, therefore, is not fair."

"I do not mean by inconstant," replied Emmy, "that he was exactly inconstant to me, though even then it seems but a splitting of straws, but that he was inconstant to the love he first professed. He made vows which I never demanded, and he—broke them."

Christina was silent for a moment.

"You must see, Christina," pursued Emmy, in her low, sad tones, "that this case can hardly be measured by the measure you would apply to another. The love that H—, *he* inspires, is one that he makes of himself: according to the standard he sets up, so will the girl that loves him fix it."

Christina felt that this was indisputably true.

"Herbert told me that he loved me," continued Emmy, with some emotion; "I accepted it as *his* love. I had never loved before—had never thought of love; I knew it for the first time as he told me of it—not as love, but as *his* love. As days and weeks got on, he told me more—how much and how dearly he loved, and I accepted it as *his* "how much," and *his* "how dearly." As his, so was mine: we loved together. *His* failed; what could mine do? It did not fail: it could not then mate with his."

"Emmy," said Christina, in admiration, and tenderly supporting the weeping girl, "you do indeed deserve all the love that the best of men could offer. Oh! don't be cast down, dear child. I declare I would give the thing I love best to see you happy now; I really would. I would become a servant, and work, to see you two wedded, even now."

"Don't say so, Christina dear," said Emmy: "I believe it all; but do not say so. It can only tempt me, and at a time when I feel I have done what is right, and that the worst is past."

A long-drawn breath broke from Christina, as she thought to herself, "As long as she dreads a sense of temptation there is hope for him." Nevertheless,

as her mind just then carelessly turned it over, she could not feel sanguine as to the result. Emmy was so utterly simple, and guileless, and open, that no sophistry would have any effect upon her. How could one hope to prove that he had not been inconstant, when she met her with the argument, "He said one thing and did another?" The only hope was that by degrees she might be led to remember that others thought him blameless; and her mind was naturally so fair, that this might work wonders. One thing had already struck Christina, and that was—that to be master of the position, she ought to have Herbert's confidence, as well as Emmy's. And this might not be so difficult, either. These were all mere ideas, floating in undefined shape across her mind, as she continued conversing with Emmy. She had not time to put them into shape, but they, and others like them—such as enlisting Madame d'Aulaincourt in the cause—flitted by, ready for use as occasion permitted. One thing was definite—that she should work heart and soul on Emmy the short time she remained in Lamford; of doing which, with her intimacy at Kemp, and their new friendship just cemented, she should have plenty of opportunities.

And with her energy and fertility of expedient, undoubtedly much progress would have been made; but startling and unexpected events in Lamford followed each other in such rapid succession—indeed, the rest of our tale contains little else—that she had time for no combination whatever. How silly and puny are all our efforts! the merest chances of existence are enough to upset them; and the greatest schemes of

our life depend often for success upon a change in the compass, or on a shower of rain.

While the two had been talking the wind had been gradually getting fresher, and Dacre, who had been fishing some distance off, had found it necessary, in consequence, to shift his ground, and to try a more sheltered part of the stream, higher up. He was now not far from where Emmy and Christina were sitting, and the former could distinctly see him throwing his fly from where they were.

The laughter and conversation in the "Folly" had meantime either receded or drawn nearer, as the little vessel tacked off and on. Just as they last finished speaking it seemed close under them, and Christina was making some remark about the weather's becoming colder, when a loud scream was heard, accompanied by violent splashing and cries for help. Emmy had just time to see Dacre throw down his rod and plunge into the water, when she and Christina with one accord left their seats and ran violently down the wood to the open ground. Emmy, being the lightest and youngest, and long accustomed to rustic scrambling, soon got in front, and reached the grass by the river in time to see all the party in the "Folly" struggling in the water, and her beloved friend Cecile d'Aulaincourt just disappearing beneath its surface.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOST LILY.

Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair?
A tress o' raven hair,
O' drowned maiden's hair?—KINGSLEY.

O! pure in heart, from thy sweet dust shall grow
Lilies. LONGFELLOW.

THE first definite result which we can with certainty affirm to have followed on the capsizing of the "Folly," was the immediate flight of Mr. Arthur Deane from the dangers of his position. Making the best use of his arms and legs which a public school education had endowed with the capability of swimming, and turning his head towards the "Mouse," he soon reached the extreme point of that friendly shore, being much aided by the current, which swept him transversely thereto with the most convenient rapidity. Having safely landed him thereon, where, with his long dripping hair, his still longer moustaches, and his querulous tones, he resembled some ill-omened water-bird just roused from his native reeds—the least we say about him further the better. Nobody took any notice of him, and when he swam away from those helpless ones, whom it

would have been better to have gone down with than have left, he fairly swam himself out of society—as far as Lamford is concerned.

Not so Mr. Edward Wordsworth. Whatever this gentleman's other faults, lack of courage, or want of presence of mind in danger, was not amongst them. In the first impulse he seized Nora Deane, but feeling that that was hardly fair, he left her for a moment to render assistance to the eldest Miss Harbottle, whom he succeeded, by dint of pulling, paddling, and splashing, in keeping so near the former, that unassisted he was able to support both these young ladies, until one of the punts manned by the men from the island bore down upon them. With Minnie Harbottle and Cecile d'Aulaincourt the case was different. The latter was probably struck by some part of the little vessel when it foundered, as she seems to have sunk at once. The former, however, floated away, then sank, then appeared again, and finally was rescued by Dacre, and at once conveyed to Lepp Farm under Hetherington's care, in a senseless state.

At the outset of the catastrophe Dacre committed a mistake for which, under such circumstances, he may fairly be held blameless, but which deprived one sufferer of his assistance until it was almost too late, and another until it was quite so. It has been mentioned, that at the moment of the accident he threw himself into the water. The vessel capsized somewhat above where he was. When once out of his depth and in the stream, he became aware that the current being against him would render it impossible for him to reach the scene of action until much valu-

able time had been lost. It was a hard necessity, but to a mind naturally cool the remedy for the difficulty suggested itself in a few minutes. He must return to land, run up the bank to a point above the scene of danger, and swim down upon it. This he did without losing more time, and he was soon enough thereby to save Miss Minnie Harbottle's life. The other sufferers being thus out of the reach of danger, and the gentlemen having their hands and legs free, the next question was about Cecile d'Aulaincourt, whose disappearance excited the utmost dismay. After a hurried consultation with each other, holding on at the side of a punt, which with the island party was pushing on for the Bickerton shore, and with Miss Melton on shore, who had never taken her eyes off the spot where her friend was last seen, Dacre and Wordsworth set themselves to the search by swimming round the spot in a circle of a certain size, and narrowing it each time. In this they were now joined by Lester Harbottle, who had been at too great a distance to render assistance before; and, as the agonizing truth grew plainer that Cecile was lost, by old Colonel Deane himself, who plunged into the water, and was only prevented by main force from perilling his own life in a calamity of which he now accused himself of being the cause.

The melancholy pity was that none of the gentlemen were divers excepting Lester Harbottle, and he only a very young one, so that nothing could be done in that way. There was an experienced diver who lived two miles off, and there were drags at Lamm's Ferry about the same distance, but the time which

would elapse before either could arrive would put the result beyond hope.

"If Capel were only here," said Dacre, stamping his foot with vexation as he got on shore, "he would find her in three minutes."

"Are you sure of that?" said Lester; "a man must be able to do more than just go under water to discover what is beneath."

"I tell you," returned Dacre, "that he can dive like a duck: he could do everything of that kind. I remember him at Oxford fetching up coin that had been thrown in."

"Let us send for him," said old Harbottle; "by all means, as well as the other. Let no means for saving her which can be taken be omitted."

"How to find him is the point?" said Lester.

"I'll tell you," said Dacre; "if he is not at the house, he is down wandering at the beeches,—that is a favourite spot of his for moping;" and he cast a reproachful look at Emmy, which went to her very heart: "But how to send for him? Miss d'Aulaincourt must have been in the water—I shudder to think how long."

"Some twelve minutes," said Harbottle, consulting his watch.

"Here is a man on a likely-looking animal," said Dacre, pointing to a decent farmer who was riding slowly up. Without more ado, Lester ran up to, accosted and half-pulled the wondering owner off his horse, which he at once mounted himself, and was away like the wind before the latter had quite made up his mind as to the nature of the proceeding.

Meantime the anxiety of each individual in the party was intense. Wordsworth cursed himself in very foolish terms as being the cause of the mischief. The Colonel lamented, though in more chosen language, his mad imprudence in sanctioning the ladies being in the boat at all. Dacre reproached himself for his precipitation in choosing a bad spot for entering the water, by which Miss d'Aulaincourt had lost the aid of his ready arm. Emmy's heart bled when she thought that Cecile's death would be laid to her door, for being instrumental in keeping Herbert from the *fête*. Christina tried to cheer her, but it was perfectly plain, from the scared look with which she continued gazing at the spot where Cecile had disappeared, how the catastrophe was working.

Meantime knots of stragglers from Lepp Farm began to gather with vague and impossible offers of assistance, while the opposite side of the river to which the high road was adjacent betokened that the news was spreading. Still there was hope that it would not reach Lamford until Cecile's life was saved, if saved it was to be. The messenger despatched to Lamm's Ferry for the drags could hardly have reached that spot yet, and it was a good two miles from thence: a melancholy consolation—for though it disposed of any apprehension of the news getting prematurely to Kemp, it rendered more distant one means of recovering the lost girl.

Nearly double the time which Harbottle had last indicated as the number of minutes of Cecile's immersion in the water had elapsed, when a horseman coming at full speed appeared in the distance. Every

heart leaped as his proximity denoted the person to be Herbert. Christina wondered now whether he could do what had been predicted of him, or whether it was merely the admiring partiality of his friend that said so. His manner was favourable, which was one blessing. It was evidently that of a man confident of the power he was called upon to exert. Throwing himself from his horse almost before the animal was quite checked, he applied himself so immediately to the work, that hope seemed spontaneously to revive in every breast.

"Where was she last seen, and who saw her?" he asked, as he divested himself of his coat and waistcoat.

"I did," said Emmy, coming up and touching his arm; "I have hardly taken my eyes off the spot since. It is in a direct line with this thorn here: there is a large eddy there, which never seems to alter. "Do you think you can save her, Herbert?" she finished, in a low tone.

Perhaps he might have thought that those words conveyed a promise of future hope, if he did. But no motion on his part shewed that he noticed them, or was conscious of anything, save the terrible catastrophe which had happened.

"Good!", he said: "Now let those two punts keep about ten yards on either side of me, and be ready to bear a hand the moment they catch a sight of a lady's dress; not too quickly, nor so as to run over me, but gently." This was addressed to the men, who had kept continually working their punts over the ground, more from a desire to render assistance than from any aid which the step could possibly afford.

All this, though done coolly and without precipitation, took not many seconds in passing, and certainly not more than two minutes had elapsed from the time when Herbert dismounted and that when,—having walked some twenty-five yards above the spot indicated by Herbert, thereby avoiding the mistake Dacre had committed,—he entered the water.

A sigh of relief broke from the Colonel as he saw him first breast the current, and then slowly glide down on it;—every movement betokened the practised and experienced swimmer. As had been arranged, when he reached the fatal spot Dacre and Emmy held up their hands. He turned his head, caught the signal, and was down like a duck.

He was not very long out of sight. He appeared again in a few seconds, swam up against the stream a little to the side of the spot, and again disappeared: this time he was longer, and when he rose again, it was some ten yards lower down. A punt bore down to him, and as he lent his hands against it, he carried on a hurried conversation with the boatmen within it. At last he cried out,—

"She is not about here, Dacre: there is a most powerful current underneath, which must have carried her lower down. These men say that there is a strong back-water beneath that bush yonder: our only chance is to try that."

There was a general move at this to the bush in question, which was some two hundred yards lower down. It was not so easy of observation, moreover, from the Bickerton bank, as it overhung the river several feet, and most of the party had to trust to the

few who, by leaning over, could command a view of the water beneath it.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Harbottle, with Mr. Hetherington, had joined those on the bank; her own daughter, whom she had left with the elder one, and with Nora and Mrs. Deane, being pronounced out of danger. She was desirous of rendering what assistance she could the moment Cecile's body should be recovered. Lester Harbottle, too, arrived at this time with a pair of thorough-breds from Bickerton, which he could hardly hold, harnessed to a light four-wheeled basket-phaeton, such as military officers use in Austria when on a campaign. Herbert had brought it over lately, and had sent Lester for it when he himself came to the river, thinking it would be better for Miss d'Aulaincourt to be taken direct to Bickerton in her state, where there would be every appliance for restoring life, not to be found at Lepp, the resources of which were already in full demand for the other sufferers.

By this time a large concourse had assembled on the opposite bank, and Christina groaned in spirit when she thought of how little chance there was of the news not reaching the poor mother; but her own excitement, as well as Emmy's, was at such a pitch, that no one thought retained the pre-eminence in her mind for more than a moment. Herbert on this occasion, after diving beneath the still water which he had indicated, remained so long below, that apprehensions commenced being whispered about for his safety. At last a tremendous shout from the opposite bank announced a discovery, and a black garment floating on the top of the water below the bush was the signal for

the punts to bear down. Emmy and Christina both burst into tears.

It seemed but a few seconds after this that they were hurried into the vehicle hard by, together with the lifeless remains of the once light-hearted Cecile, and that Hetherington took his place on the box with Herbert, who, thus dripping as he was, seized the reins. The horses, which had not been twice in harness before,—indeed, had only been sent down to Bickerton for trial a few days previously,—reared straight up, gave one mad plunge forward and were off over the ground like the wind.

Hetherington says, that to this moment he has no idea how that journey was performed. The grass had all been got in, and there was nothing to impede their progress across the park. As to whether Herbert held or guided the horses, he has not the smallest remembrance. The clearest part of it to his mind is that point when they arrived at the house, which seemed to him about a minute from the moment they started; it must have been more, for the distance is over two miles and half: there, he says, he distinctly remembers the grooms clinging to the animals' bits, and that the pole had given way.

However, the object was gained: Cecile was brought into the best quarters for restoration to life, and in the shortest possible time, and Emmy Melton, for the first and last time in her existence, found herself beneath the roof of the mansion at Bickerton Firs.

* * * * *

"The only child of her mother, and she was a widow."

The terrible news was conveyed about an hour after the events just recorded, to the bereaved parent, by Dr. Crompton and the Rev. Henry Motcombe: by the old friend, the healer of the body, and by the younger friend, the physician of the soul. The selection of these two was on the whole a natural, though, with regard to the former, not a judicious selection. The old Doctor was far more shocked by the intelligence than even the mother, outwardly. When it was first conveyed to him, he wept aloud, for he was much attached to every one at Kemp, and particularly to Cecile: and though in presence of Madame d'Aulaincourt he comported himself with dignity, and subdued his emotion, yet the expression of his feelings, in the smallest degree, was undesirable. Motcombe, on the contrary, feeling as deeply,—indeed, the loss of her who had been a sister to his loved Frederica opened at once all his old grief, conveyed no notion, in speaking of the matter, that he had any feeling for himself, or that his own grief was in question; it was all sympathy, not expressed, but implied, for the mother's woe. Indeed, this young priest, both in his outer as well as in his inner life, was remarkably fitted to be the comforter and adviser of the afflicted. He just shewed enough of his own sorrow to draw the hearts of the unfortunate towards him, and just little enough to shew that it could not interfere with his office. He was within himself as much in his calling as without, and consequently his calling was felt whenever and whatever he spoke.

Madame d'Aulaincourt bore the blow with serenity and resignation. She had heard of there having been

an accident, and that one of the Miss Harbottles had been the sufferer. In thought, she had placed herself in the position of the mother, and then, as the remembrance came upon her of the great inaccuracy which always exists as respects the person lost in reports conveyed in this way, she tried to strengthen herself for the blow in case it were intended for her. When, therefore, she saw the gentlemen enter, she told them that there was no occasion for them to proclaim their errand: "She knew it," she said, "already. She was childless."

Such is the outward bearing of the Christian woman. But of the inner feelings of the human being—ah! who can tell *them* fully, save He who formed the human heart? "The only child of her mother, and she was a widow." Say to the bereaved those words, and it will tell but too well the volumes they contain.

But a few months before there had been one other bereavement, and now this one—the last!

Put on thy mourning, Kemp! Autumn flowers should have no place with thee. Thy winter hath set in betimes!

From this it will appear that all human aid was too late for the poor "Lily," though rendered, oh, how zealously and efficiently! Her remains were removed to Kemp that evening, whither Emmy and Christina had gone soon after the interview undertaken by Dr. Crompton and Mr. Motcombe. It was indeed necessary for Christina to accompany Mignonette. The latter may well be held blameless, if, after the distress she had been suffering for days previously, she became useless as a comforter when this fresh blow

fell on her too. Her friendship with Cecile had been peculiar, and though we in this mere outline of a history have not entered into it, our readers must not suppose that it was the less deep-seated, or the less strong. Cecile d'Aulaincourt had been at school a large little-girl of twelve beside Emmy, who was a little big-girl of sixteen. The contrast in their sizes, their ages, and their ranks in that small world, was not greater than the one in their natures and tastes; and yet they were drawn together, and the sympathy between them was stronger than such school-girl sympathies ordinarily are, even in their strongest phase. Such cases are common enough in the world, although it is only in those of very marked contrast that we are struck by them. The bold, open, careless girl loved the quiet, painstaking, simple one: the deficiencies of the one supplied those of the other; the faults of the one excited the admiration of the other; the tranquillity of the one was as a refuge to the other from her own exuberance. Emmy and Cecile loved each other: "The one was left; the other was taken away." Emmy was strong-principled enough to have borne affliction well. She had seen it, and had been a comforter in it, in all forms, in her father's parish for years: she ought, therefore, to have been able to bear her share; but she had already received a blow herself but two days before, and now she was fairly stunned.

Christina had also received a shock which might well have unsettled her; but she was older, better trained in regulating the impulses of her own heart, better skilled in stifling its rebellious compunctions.

Moreover, she was one of those whose souls rise high in the hour of trial, however deep a depression they may feel afterwards, when the trial has passed. She therefore supplied every want which Emmy in her weakness failed in meeting, and the two together were that night the "oil and wine" in the poor mother's wounds. But Christina was the worker, and the thinker, and the speaker. Emmy did and said everything that was kind and right, but it was as an automaton, even when told and guided.

And yet who shall blame her? Had these circumstances happened one week before, who shall say that she would have been less strong than Christina? There are those among us capable of bearing a millstone, who in the time of hard trial will faint under a feather. There is a record of One who, though He bore, and still bears, the sins and sorrows and temptations and troubles of millions, fainted under the burden of His own one wooden cross! A true encouragement to the sufferer, be he ever so goaded!

There was hardly one of the party at the "Mouse" who did not blame himself for a share in the lamentable accident which crowned that day. Among the seniors, Colonel Deane was well-nigh beside himself, as in some degree the responsibility for Cecile's safety lay, through his wife, upon himself: but what most pained him was that conversation with Dacre on the subject of the ill-omened boat, the "Folly," that piece of vainglory in his son's behalf so bitterly punished in that son's cowardice—for so the staunch old fellow termed it—in floating out of danger.

"Good God! Nora," he said, the same evening to

his daughter, when they were sufficiently recovered to speak, "that a son of mine should float away—he is not man enough to swim—and leave a helpless girl to drown!"

Much the same was the burden of Mr. Harbottle's lament, save that he had no son to condemn for misbehaviour; but it was the same abuse of responsibility upon the shoulders of the elders for the safety of the young ladies, after which he most undoubtedly, in common with his wife and Colonel and Mrs. Deane, had not sufficiently looked. That they had all children, equally perilled, mattered nothing; it was a just judgment upon those who were responsible, that the blow had thus indirectly fallen upon themselves,—as who among them would be able to forgive himself the undischarged trust? So said and felt Harbottle, and in his rugged way there is no doubt he suffered for this mistrust to his dying day.

This feeling was equally strong among the younger folk. Lester Harbottle said, in his rough, outlandish lingo, that "his heart was clean cut up. He had no business to trust the boat in the hands of the other two. I ought to have taken a big stone and sunk it, Sir, by" (we won't say what) "I ought." And he felt all this, and did not sleep for a week or more; and when he saw Capel he cried like a baby about it, although he was a great, strong young fellow with large whiskers.

Edward Wordsworth was perhaps as much sobered by this event for the time, as a young man can be upon whom sobriety of thought only acts for the time. He had behaved gallantly enough, but he could not forget that he had hired the "Folly," that he had put

Cecile d'Aulaincourt therein, that he was the head and fountain of all the mischief. He was so much shocked out of his natural manner as to say to Nora the day after, "When I saw Capel bring her up in that gallant manner, though he had not breath in his body to subsist upon himself, I really thought he deserved Bickerton, and twice as much." And that speech, too, wrought mischief; for Nora had been herself saved by Edward, and it removed the only thing she disapproved of in his character.

There are yet two others to speak of in connexion with the sad story—Edwin Dacre and Herbert Capel. The former, who had little enough romance in his character, was after his fashion as much shaken as the whole community. He had had common sense enough, he thought, to see what was wrong, and yet he must needs be content with only giving a hint, instead of staying to avert danger, or at all events to remedy it by his immediate presence, when it occurred. He must needs go, he thought, on his own amusement, although the danger was staring him in the face. "As long as I live," Edwin Dacre says, "I shall never forgive myself for the fault of that day: I saw it, I warned Capel of it,—I warned the Colonel of it, and yet I went away on my own amusement, and left them all to their fate!"

And Herbert?

Herbert, like Emmy, for the moment was stunned. After it was all over, it seemed to him that what he did in swimming, diving, giving directions, &c., was mechanical—simply because he was stunned. But when that passed, the same self-accusation came, "Why was

I away?" The old story. He, the defeated, was too *proud* to face Emmy. When he began to analyse the question, there was no real reason why *either* of them should have staid away; and least of all, if either, should it have been himself. And it is more than probable that, considering Mignonette's coming to Lamford at all, she would not have objected facing this party if he went there too. Had he been there, even if the "Folly's" occupation had not been altogether gone, Cecile d'Aulaincourt would still have breathed. His presence at the party would have been something; his powers of saving, everything!

CHAPTER VIII.

PARTINGS.

I can tell you one thing, my lord, and which I hear from common rumours,—how Lord Timon's happy hours are done and past, and his estate shrinks from him.—SHAKESPEARE.

——There were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts. * * * BYRON.

THE appearance of Lamford on the day following the disaster at the "Mouse" afforded ample evidence of the extent to which it was felt. In plain English, it was a local calamity. A country town nowadays wears on most occasions a peculiarly *triste* and weary appearance, but after an event such as we have just recorded, its activity is more mournful still. The knots of gossips in the market-place, the ill-placed diligence of those who wish to be of use, the pregnant, solemn importance of others whom the misfortune least affects, are all of them parts of the sad to-morrow which creeps past wearily upon the event.

Lamford no doubt was sincere. Cecile d'Aulaincourt and the family at Kemp were almost universally beloved, and had it been otherwise, the dreadful shock came so home to every one that it could hardly fail to excite sympathy as well as alarm. This is the reason why mankind as a body always feels some visitations more than others. The sensation of each one

is, might it not have happened to them? And the nearer is the scene of the disasters, or the more known the sufferers, the stronger is this feeling. The accident at the Lundhill Colliery, for instance, involving in that one fell explosion of the destroying gas the loss of some two hundred souls, struck us Londoners not with so much awe as the falling of three houses one fine morning a few streets off, which only brought with it the loss of four.

But in Lamford, as elsewhere, even these matters cannot interfere with the ordinary business of life; and though most of the shops, out of respect to the bereaved, have their shutters up, times are too hard to dispense with all manner of trade, and so the buying and selling goes on, and each man goes to his labour as on other days. So Mr. Percy in his office, opens his letters, and puts those which demand immediate answer methodically in one place, and those to which later attention will be sufficient in another, as is his ordinary habit. One, however, claims more immediate care this morning; and the old gentleman, slow as he is ordinarily, thinks that no time should be lost at all in acting on the information contained therein. A few lines then, carefully, but not so very slowly written, addressed to Herbert Capel, Esq., is despatched before his own breakfast by special messenger to Bickerton, soliciting that gentleman to appoint a convenient hour for him, Mr. Percy, to call upon him for the purpose of making a very important communication.

Herbert, however, was a person who never lost time needlessly, and as he thought that if the com-

munication was important, it had better be made at once, despatched for answer a message that he would call on Mr. Percy himself in half-an-hour.

Leaving Dacre, therefore, to dispose of himself for the morning, which the latter did by spending it beneficially in his temporary cure at Lamm's Ferry, where, after the late event, he was pretty sure to be listened to, Herbert rode over to the little town, calling as he went at Kemp, to enquire after the family, and offer his services in any way which might be of use.

The answer was, "That the ladies were as well as could be expected, and that Miss Percy would take upon herself to let Mr. Capel know if he could be of assistance."

Thence he proceeded to Mr. Percy's office, where he found the worthy attorney looking very pale, and seeming, for him, very nervous. After the usual civilities, Mr. Percy said,—

"Your calling, Mr. Capel, has saved me much uneasiness, for it will at once bring us to a communication I have received this morning, which, until I had placed it in your possession, would have continued to make me very uncomfortable. Read that, Sir."

So saying, he placed in his hands a largish-looking letter, enclosing another similar letter. The outer one, which was addressed to Mr. Percy, ran thus:—

"*Aldermanbury, London, August* 10, 1849.

"SIR,

"Presuming you still to be the agent for Mr. Herbert Capel in all matters connected with the Bickerton estate, we

beg to hand you a copy-letter we have received from Mr. Hugh Scratton, from Sydney, Australia, in answer to our package containing the parcel which was directed to be given to him by a memorandum found in the late Admiral Ayscough's papers. You will oblige us by communicating to Mr. Capel its contents, and by informing us whether he has any reason to doubt the accuracy of the information contained therein, or what steps he proposes to call upon the executors of the late Admiral Ayscough to pursue in case a document such as that indicated should be put forward.

"We have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient Servants,

"CROSKEY AND BULTEEL.

"*Attorneys for the Executors of the late Admiral Ayscough's last Will and Testament.*

"*Daniel Percy, Esq.*"

The inner enclosure ran thus:—

(COPY.)

"*Sydney, Australia, N. S. W., May* 3, 1849.

"GENTLEMEN,

"I am in receipt of your communication of January 8, as well as of the parcel sent per 'James Baines.' I am on the point of starting for England in a few days, but as the 'Marco Polo' leaves this to-night, and is a fast sailer, I think it right to put you in possession of the information which the latter discloses, and which leads me to fear that some very unlucky mistake has been committed in reference to the settlement of the late Admiral Ayscough's affairs.

"The parcel in question, which was directed by the memorandum upon it to be delivered into my hands, contains a will executed by the Admiral in January, 1848, just a year before the date of your letter. It was executed in my presence, and in that of a servant of whom I know not what has since become.

"You inform me in your letter that a will of the Admiral's has been duly proved and acted upon. If the will so proved is subsequent to the one I hold in my possession, which I should be inclined to doubt, there is no mischief done; but it is fair that any legatee or devisee under that will should be made acquainted with the existence of the one dated January, 1848, without delay.

"I may mention that this latter document gives the Bickerton estates to young Mr. Wordsworth, the testator's second cousin.

"I shall probably be in London within a week after the receipt of this, and shall do myself the honour of calling on you without loss of time.

"I remain, Gentlemen,
"Faithfully yours,
"HUGH H. SCRATTON.

"*Messrs. Croskey and Bulteel,*
"*Aldermanbury, London.*"

Herbert read these letters through with an air of astonishment which it needs not our pen to describe. "Here is a pretty mess, Mr. Percy," he said, as he concluded his perusal of the last: "upon my honour, I do not think that there ever was a more unlucky wretch than I am."

"The loss of such an estate," said Mr. Percy, trying to look as commiserative as he could, "is indeed——"

"Oh, hang the estate!" said Herbert, petulantly, "it may go, and all with it. The only thing I care for is the dishonour of having been spending another man's money all this time; spending money, too, which I have no power to repay;" and Herbert flung himself into a chair, perfectly floored.

"Stay," said Mr. Percy, "you are somewhat hasty: this may come to nothing, after all; the will may be informal."

"And do you think, Mr. Percy, that I would keep another's property from him by such a title as a legal informality?"

"No, perhaps not, and I should be the last to advise you," replied the attorney: "but you must remember that you were placed in possession by what seemed a perfectly just and legal title, and until we have some real proof that it is not so, there is no reason to speak about repaying mesne profits."

Herbert made a gesture of impatience. "To my mind," he said, "there cannot be a shadow of a doubt in the matter. The will I hold under is a will made in 1846: this Mr. Scratton, who, it is well known, was a most intimate friend of the late Admiral, holds one made two years later. It is clear that I am spending another man's money."

"Yes, Mr. Capel," said old Percy, deprecatingly; "but you do not know that there may not be in this new will a heavy rent-charge on the estate, to reimburse you for what will have been a very cruel disappointment, as the Admiral must have known that the first will was not destroyed."

It struck Herbert that there was some probability in this, and he paused for a moment.

"Anyhow," he said at length, "I have no business at Bickerton: Wordsworth ought to know that at once."

"But, my dear Sir," replied Mr. Percy; "excuse me, but you are really so very precipitate. There are two Mr. Wordsworths, this one and a younger brother.

The elder was at enmity with the Admiral, and at the greatest enmity at that very time when it is pretended that this will was made. By conveying to him the information contained in these letters, you may be raising hopes destined never to be realized. Your own case should warn you against that."

This argument went further with Herbert than any yet advanced.

"What is the younger brother like?"

"He is blind."

"Poor fellow! then I hope it is he," returned Herbert: "One thing appears clear to me, Mr. Percy, and that is, that whichever of the brothers is the fortunate man, I am not he. I ought to leave Bickerton this very day."

"Now pray, my dear Sir, do nothing of the sort," said the attorney, almost imploringly: "take some one's advice, if not mine: consult Mr. Dacre. Only wait till we see this will. Such a step now would let it all out, and raise false hopes in Mr. Edward Wordsworth directly."

The wily old gentleman saw where his strong point lay. "A week cannot really matter one way or the other," he continued, as he saw Herbert hesitating.

"As a question of right principle, it matters very much indeed," replied Herbert: "However, I will be guided by Dacre. Now tell me honestly, Mr. Percy, do you not yourself think that Edward Wordsworth is the one alluded to in the letter?"

"When I consider that the Admiral never expressed any interest in the younger brother, I am inclined to think so," was the reply: "but when I call to mind

that the elder had most grievously offended the Admiral at the very time at which this will is said to bear date, why then it seems impossible that he can be the person meant."

"Well, I hope he will make good use of it when he gets it," said Herbert, with a sigh: "What answer do you propose to make to these letters?"

"Merely to thank Messrs. Croskey, and to request the executors neither to do nor to say anything until Mr. Scratton is over with the will."

"And just add, if you please, that I have not the smallest intention of opposing a rightful claim, and that if I hold over now, it is only because I do not know who the real owner is to whom I should surrender my occupation. Do not write, however, at all, until I see you again. I go to seek for Dacre, and when I have found him I will return."

So saying, Herbert left the office. As he passed up the street to where he had left the pony, on which he ordinarily came to Lamford, he could not help saying to himself, "So much for my great fortune! And all the good it has done me has been to rob me of my Emmy!" He forgot that it had enabled him to read his own heart. Ah, there is nothing in this life, my friend, be it ever so hard, which is not for thy good!

Dacre, on his advice being sought, joined it to that of Mr. Percy without hesitation. As for leaving Bickerton until they saw this will, he considered it sheer nonsense; and to all Herbert's compunctions as to the wrongful act, he only replied, "Well, then, consider yourself as the rightful owner's tenant: you will have to pay for your occupation thus far, if it

should turn out that you have no business here; why not pay for a week or ten days longer?"

Herbert yielded, as he had promised to yield, but he was by no means convinced. He disagreed with Dacre on many points, in which he allowed utilitarianism to sway him, and therefore did not try to reconcile his own conscience with his advice on this.

One thing could not fail to strike Dacre under the circumstances, and that was the acquiescence with which he seemed to take the almost certain deprivation of fortune and wealth which was awaiting him. "I wonder whether it is that he expects to be *d'accord* again with the little Mignon in consequence of it," he said to Henry Motcombe, who had also been taken into confidence in the matter of Mr. Scratton's letter.

"I think not," replied the Curate: "from what he has said to me, I gather that all hope is at an end in that quarter. In this respect we must look upon his loss of her as a great blessing—an affliction intended to prepare him for what would have been otherwise a very severe blow."

In truth it was so, though perhaps Herbert did not recognise it as such. The reason why he was so callous to the blow which seemed impending on his worldly fortunes was, that the only joy which could have made them appreciable was taken away; he had lost Mignonette, and every worldly acquisition was vain and valueless without her. He had, therefore, only one care in the approaching visitation, which was to keep his honour intact—the old sense of pride in another form, though undoubtedly a praiseworthy one, as the world goes. "'The light of my eyes is gone

from me,'" he said to Motcombe on that afternoon; "what worldly adversity, then, can affect me more?"

Ah! widowed indeed!

The following morning, too, brought another change, which, however, Herbert did not hear of till the day was far spent. He had to be present at the coroner's inquest held on poor Cecile, and it was not till several hours after his return to Bickerton that the circumstances came to him through a few lines from Christina. The post that morning brought to Kemp the news of the dangerous illness of Mrs. Melton, and an immediate summons of her daughter to her bed-side. Necessary and just as was Mignonette's attendance on Cecile's bereaved mother, the call was too imperative to be disregarded for a moment. "Mrs. Melton's maid," the letter said, "would meet Miss Melton at the railway terminus in London, to accompany her the longer journey to the West." It was necessary to see Madame d'Aulaincourt directly, and Christina immediately sought her on Emmy's behalf. That lady would not hear of any temporising on the question: the sick mother desiring her daughter's care was too sacred a summons in her eyes for any doubt to be entertained respecting it. Emmy was to start that afternoon. Her presence was not necessary at the inquest: indeed, there were so many who saw or took part in the sad accident, that the testimony of the ladies could be dispensed with without difficulty. Before she started, the kind lady saw her, and in a voice as strong as she could command thanked her for the comfort she had brought to her lost daughter. Emmy clung to her; she could not speak—her heart

was too full for speech. The remembrance of all she had lost—of Cecile, the friend of her childhood—of Herbert, the love of her young womanhood — the thought that, even though lost, she was leaving the place made sacred by what remained; leaving, in short, the spot where the leaves had fallen of the trees that were now no more—almost choked her. She had, then, no words in reply: and perhaps the poor mother honoured her not the less for that.

"Emmy, you must come and see me again," she said, "when—when we are all stronger. Remember, I shall be alone."

Alone! How truly alone!

Emmy bowed her head, and her tears, in acquiescence; she could not find speech to answer.

"And then we may talk of old days again, and I may be able to thank you as I ought."

Before they parted, Madame d'Aulaincourt gave her a small parcel, which she did not open till she was on her journey. It contained a miniature portrait of her playfellow, in all the exuberance of her innocent mirth, and a large lock of that black hair, which seemed yet hardly dry from the cruel action of the deep, dark water.

The parting with Christina was less painful. They were to write to each other, and Christina half-promised that she would come and see her. Emmy gave all the directions for the *adieux* which she could not make in person, and which her friend was to undertake, and there was no more to say. Christina waited in some hope: at last she said,—

"And may I not convey a word to him?"

Emmy raised her large soft eyes on to Christina's face, as if enquiring what she meant, and at last replied,—

"Tell him how gallantly he behaved on that day. And if you ever should speak of—of what we were together, tell him my prayers are with him night and morning. Beg him to seek strength where it only can be found; and when he is able to bear it, we may meet, as we have done during these happy two months;—oh! how happy, until this cruel explanation came and marred all; yes, all. We may meet again as a dear brother and sister: I will pray for that, too."

"Is there, then, no hope, Emmy? I could not do this, indeed I could not, were it me."

Emmy was silent for a few moments, then continued:—

"Hush! I cannot speak of this now: I almost feel it unseemly. Remember Cecile."

Christina could say no more. So pressing the little flower more fondly to her, she said, "Good-bye, Emmy, dear: God keep you and bless you."

And never went a purer or a more unselfish prayer to heaven than that one.

And Emmy is gone—driving down the shrubbery. There are the old ruins so often looked at in wondering awe, and the bubbling Lamm beneath, wending its way down to that cruel water which——; and there is the market-place, and the knots of people at the door of the public-house where the inquest is being held on——; and there is the old church, and the green limes, and the ground where she is so soon to sleep; and Bella

Dillwyn's windows, and Castle Bank, and all—they are gone;—nought but the high-road, and the fields, and the dull sky, for the sun has veiled his light this day. And Emmy feels in truth that she also is alone. Alone, without and within! Perhaps the bitter weeds will find a soil there too. Already does she wear the crape.

Ah! widowed indeed!

But Emmy is gone, and he knew it not. At the moment the carriage which bore her passed, the Coroner was addressing some words of compliment to him on his wondrous courage and gallantry in trying to save the drowned girl;—mere words, which just fell on his ears and floated away on the wind that swept up the dust behind the carriage which bore his beloved away.

And Emmy is gone. He knew it not till a few lines from Christina came to tell him of the circumstance, and that she had a message for him, to be delivered at the first convenient opportunity. He received her note late—at night, and hastened into the gardens to hide the traces of a shock which seemed to freeze the life within him. He looked up at the sky. There was no moon then! No, that once hopeful light had set! There was neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, in his horizon! nought but the impenetrable, cheerless night!

Oh! how blank and weary is the view to him who leaves that loved one whom he hopes to meet again! how sick the wide expanse of uncheering nothingness which meets the craving gaze of *his* heart's vision whom the wings of necessity are carrying away from

his joy but for a season! But to him who never hopes to see again, or if to see, but to behold that one as another's, or for certainty as never his, who shall tell the weary view that remains to him? The shipwrecked mariner who, alone on the frail raft, hour after hour, scans the wide horizon for the friendly sail, and sees nought but the same dull field of leaden water and leaden sky, has not a more sickening vision than such a one, floating alone in the open, unvaried dreariness of his uncheered, solitary life. It was now that the iron entered into Herbert's soul; now it was that he, the fascinating and gay, could learn the true purport of an ever-gnawing, hopeless love. Perhaps now, too, he realized what Mignonette felt during those months following on his succession to his present fortune, when the sun rose, and the sun set, and the weary hands successively pointed to the hours on the dial of each day, and he came not. Poor Herbert! poor Emmy! such hearts as yours deserved a better fate; but now they are widowed indeed.

And the Lily and the Rose sleep side by side. The hand that but a few months ago placed *immortelles* over her sister-cousin's grave lies motionless, while other hands, and other eyes, must place those offerings instead, and to her as well. Who knows but that the spirits of the two, smiling together as they did in life, are there receiving the precious homage of those broken hearts?

To Lamford's honour it should be recorded, that it was long before the place, collectively or individually, recovered the terrible blow which robbed it of one of its fairest flowers. Nearly the whole town attended

the funeral, and the expression of feeling witnessed was such as never will be forgotten as long as the event itself is remembered.

Henry Motcombe took advantage of it on the following Sunday to deliver one of his most powerful appeals of warning and exhortation, which we will hope produced a good and flourishing effect. Unluckily, so differently do people take things in this life, in one quarter it produced the reverse of what was intended. Mr. Harbottle, senior, thought proper to consider a paragraph in the composition as equivalent to a prayer for the dead, and not only withdrew himself from the church, but forbad his family, for the present, at all events, to attend its services. The clergy all called on him, and the delinquent Curate especially, to reason with him, and induce him to change his resolution, but for the present he was obdurate; and serious thoughts were entertained of putting Edwin Dacre upon him—for whose religious opinions, though it is not quite certain that he had ever heard in detail in what they differed from those of others, he professed the profoundest veneration.

Alas! more pride.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIRROR TO THE HEART.

My heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seem'd greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
It has fallen into the sea,
And only the sorrow of others
Casts its shadow over me.—LONGFELLOW.

DURING the quiet hours which Christina passed this week and the one following at Kemp, her mind found ample time to review the effect late events had had on her heart, besides all the collateral results likely to proceed from them to Herbert. In respect to herself, she was now able to approach the subject without alarm. The demolition of her hopes, though it really was but an event of yesterday, had, in the crowding of other circumstances into the interval, become almost a bygone,—just as a week after some great public calamity or convulsion, we can visit the ruins, and behold the overthrow with more curiosity than emotion.

That her heart, also, was forlorn and widowed, in respect of that hope which had expired for others besides herself, cannot be doubted. But she had not been untried by a similar suffering before, and the full

experience of the vanity of mere human aspirations had so far schooled her, that she could regard the result, if not without bitterness, at all events without dismay.

The most striking effect that these matters seemed to have upon herself was that she felt older. It was not the superior conceit that it was not her first disappointment which gave rise to this; it was more a sensation that she could measure her lifetime by the number of her griefs, and that in this respect her age endued her with a calmness to survey the past as well as the future, which those younger, by such a standard of measurement, had not. And this brought her by degrees, and also partly by reason of her old habit of thinking of others the moment that self was getting the upper hand, to compare the probable state of Herbert's mind, after his own disappointment, with hers. From what she had seen of him since the morning of his interview with Emmy, which, to be sure, was not much, she could not be insensible to the fact that a great change had come over him. Besides the paleness, which seemed the result of some mental struggle, and which had most struck her on meeting him the day before the ill-fated party at the "Mouse," there was a fixed gravity of manner which had hardened itself into the lines of his face,—chasing away that lurking look of humour about the eyes which had ever been the prominent characteristic of his countenance. There was also an expression of weariness, toning off about the mouth into sweetness when he spoke to any one who excited his interest or his sympathy,—and just now they were many. In the

eyes of others who were not remarkably astute in observation, or who knew nothing of what had occurred previously, this change was, of course, attributed to the feelings excited by Cecile d'Aulaincourt's death; but Christina read deeper than others on most occasions, and on this possessed superior knowledge to guide her. Meantime a feeling of curiosity as to how he would bear his lot pervaded her imagination for days. Would that busy, impetuous, high-strung disposition, which was a very poem in its structure, consent to philosophize over the past, and to sit down wearily and accept the future? Would it not rather chafe and chafe, till the result left would be only a morose, disappointed, fruitless life,—but too often also, in its way, one of the many phases of a broken heart? And this brought her more and more to analyze his conduct in all his relations with Mignonette. Look at it in every way she could, she felt unable to think that he deserved the sentence on him. At times she got angry with her little friend for being so unforgiving, so relentless. The mischief had all resulted from a mistake, the head and fountain of which was Emmy's own father; and if Herbert had been to blame in so readily accepting its results, was his a fault which, after such expressed contrition, ought to shut him out from all pardon?

But Christina forgot that, when Herbert came to Bickerton, he had shewn none of the signs of grief and despair over which her mind was now busy; and yet his fate was as decided then as now. He had lost Emmy then, and was content,—he had lost Emmy now, and was in despair!

Moreover, Christina did not sufficiently submit Emmy's character and Emmy's feelings to the same test as she was submitting Herbert's. This is remarkable,—as one would have thought her more likely to have appreciated fully those of her own sex,—and can only be accounted for by remembering that her sympathies were most excited for the one who had no course but to submit. She should have looked more fully into the structure of Mignonette's disposition. It was not a whit the less peculiar, or the less fine, though of a totally different mould; and yet what caused most of the mischief was that it was actuated by precisely the same foible as Herbert's,—a sense of slight. The moving agent of Emmy's character was patient, single-hearted devotion. It never enquired, never suspected, was ready to endure in the face of every obstacle, and was utterly unadulterated by anything like over-impulse or passion. A slight on such a heart as this demolished the whole fabric on which her affection and trust was built. She loved still, it is true, because the impression was lasting, and because there remained still so much to love. But the loving trust was gone,—the image of her hopes, which, in the absence of the original image, she had fondled so long. It is by no means improbable, particularly after the day of the "Mouse," that, but for intervening circumstances—which, after all, are in the hands of a higher power, of course, the real makers or marrers of man's schemes—Emmy would have given way, and Herbert would have called her "wife!"—indeed, later, in a conversation she had with Christina, she as good as said so; but it is very question-

able whether the affection she would have thus brought with her to the altar would have been the same as that early dream which his hastiness and pride only prevented from becoming a reality. Christina might have considered all this, and she would then have paid due homage to an affection which in her present mind she could neither understand nor appreciate. The old determination, however, not to give up all hope was on her still. As soon as she could leave Madame d'Aulaincourt's side, she would try and gain Herbert's confidence, and she thought it would go hard if they two could not between them concoct some feasible plan. She counted much, too, on the effect which the solitude of Bramsholme and of her own home, and the reflections consequent thereon upon all that had passed during the last three months, would have upon Emmy. She fancied that by skilful letters, by conversations with Herbert, and finally, by a visit from herself to the little village in the West, such a combination might be effected as would, at last, demolish Mignonette's scruples, and make happy two hearts which so richly deserved to be so.

Perhaps Henry Motcombe understood Emmy's temperament as correctly as any. Dacre certainly did not, as he shewed, when he was conversing on the subject with the former on one of those days when Herbert was more than ordinarily inclined to mope.

"I have no patience with her," he said. "If Capel slighted her, he has made amends enough, I am sure. And I, too; why I made love to her for him by chanting his praises for more than six weeks."

"That was powerful aid, I allow," said the Curate,

laughing; "but I can easily understand how both that and the amends you speak of as having been made by him, should fail of effect on a disposition like hers."

"Do you? I am sure I do not. I think a woman is not worth running after who behaves in that way. Why, what did he do? Fall in love with another woman? not a bit of it: I could pardon her, if that had been the case. He got affronted: a foolish thing to do where one's happiness is concerned, I grant; but that is his only fault."

"I do not think you quite understand Miss Melton's disposition," said Motcombe; "which it strikes me that, with the very slight acquaintance I have with her, I can read. Now it appears to me, that such a disposition as hers would be more likely to pardon an actual infidelity than the fault of being trifled with. The one would have been a trespass which, on an acknowledgment of the error, even she might have overlooked; but Capel trifled with her affections, and it is the result of that act more than the act itself which has worked upon her. Of what stuff must his heart have been made, that, without the influence of any other fascination, he could have been induced to do that? You know there is many a woman who would overlook a fault that could not put up with a slight."

"I dare say," said Dacre, yawning: "but the whole subject is incomprehensible to me. To my mind, when people are very much in love, there are few obstacles which they won't surmount to gratify it. Miss Melton, according to Capel, is just as fond of him as ever. What in the name of fortune, then, can be the wisdom of her acting in this fashion?"

"It is not an easy subject to follow out," replied Motcombe; "but nevertheless, her feelings are pretty intelligible to me."

"Well, it is a lesson against trifling with the affections, as you say," returned Dacre; "though I do not apply it quite in the same way as you would. I think it is a warning to men not to trifle with *their own* affections, as Capel has done."

"Which they do by trifling with those of the woman they really love," interrupted Motcombe: "Yes, it is a warning which I have been thinking how I might render available among the poor and lowly, for the evil exists as much among them as in higher ground, and with consequences, too, that are sometimes much more fearful."

"Preach a sermon upon it," said Dacre, "and then you will drive Capel out of church after old Mr. Harbottle."

Motcombe smiled. "No," he said, "I am not of opinion that sermons are in all cases the most effective mode of inculcating a lesson among the poor. The mania for preaching, which is one of the religious features of the day, does not exist among the very lowly. It is the better class of artisans, the mechanics and their families well to do in the world, that are carried away by it. Take the metropolis, for instance. See how the clergy advertise sermons to induce the poor to go to them. They get well-dressed people in swarms instead, and always the same set, whether the preacher be Dissenter or Churchman."

"That is a remarkable fact, certainly," replied Dacre; "but I should think it were not difficult in the coun-

try, at least, to inoculate the lower orders with the same."

"Very difficult, and for the simple reason that the difficulty in the lower orders is to keep their attentions fixed."

"Well, what mode would you hit upon for teaching such a lesson as our present conversation has suggested?"

"I find this a difficulty," said Motcombe. "The great obstacle to the effectiveness of our teaching in the present day is the want of intimacy between the poor and their clergy. We may know them, and be well with them, but, excepting in rare instances, we never get to their hearts. This we cannot do, because there is no reciprocation of confidence, and there never will be generally, until confession is restored."

"And are you sanguine as to that?" asked Dacre, with a smile.

"Yes! I think it is making progress under the term 'counsel and advice.' It is only the title that frightens."

"Well! I do not say that I see harm in it," said Dacre, "in the hands of single-hearted and conscientious priests. But it has fallen into disuse; its revival is ever suggesting fears of its being abused; and its revival, too, is contrary to the spirit of the age, even if the ordinance itself be not."

"I don't like that term, 'spirit of the age,'" replied Motcombe: "Its revival will, I fear, if thwarted, be owing to those of our cloth who act too much up to that 'spirit of the age' which is Antichrist. But I did not wish to draw you into controversy. Look at

the practical advantages of it in the present state of morality. How many a tale of sorrow would not become a tale of sin, if the sufferer were taught where visibly on earth, as well as spiritually in heaven, he or she could confide their griefs! How many a seducer's designs would be laid bare in time; how many a guileless heart on the brink of ruin would, by habitually consulting her pastor and friend, and receiving from him timely aid and instruction, be saved from the torture of the 'worm that never dieth!'"

"Certainly," said Dacre; "you may revive anything in the Church that has been sanctioned by the Reformation, if the observance of it be voluntary, as far as I am concerned. But how do you bring this to bear on the present question?"

"Only indirectly," said Motcombe: "I meant, that the difficulty of teaching any lesson of the kind arose from the same cause."

"I wish you would preach upon it: I declare I would bring Capel to hear."

"Poor Capel!" said Motcombe: "I really feel for him very much. He suffers keenly, and I suspect he will continue to suffer."

"I should not wonder if the young lady came round now," said Dacre.

"I see no hope," replied Motcombe, with the air of a man who knew what he was talking of.

It may seem surprising that Capel had not at present seen Christina. The conversation just recorded took place some days after the funeral, and nearly ten days after the accident at the "Mouse." But a little consideration will explain this. Madame d'Aulain-

court, who had borne up well and bravely against her misfortune at first, gave way when the earth had closed over the remains of the last tie which bound her to the world, and for many days subsequently was alarmingly ill. During this time Christina never left her; and when a beneficial change in her state shewed itself, the circumstances which ensued on Mr. Scratton's arrival in England, and which we shall shortly have to consider, had taken place, so that for several weeks she had no opportunity of speaking to Herbert. He, on his side, it must be remembered, was not aware that Mignonette had reposed any confidence respecting their former mutual position in Wallflower, and therefore attached no such great importance to the message she had to deliver to him, as to induce him, against the obstacles which intervened, to seek an interview with her. Indeed, he appeared very little in Lamford at all: most of his walks were solitary, and his occupations in-doors chiefly confined to the making arrangements to meet that deprivation of fortune which he was convinced was awaiting him.

Christina had by this time heard twice from Emmy, though on both occasions very briefly and hurriedly. Her mother was still in great danger, and with so young a family as Mr. Melton's, she found she had more on her hands than she could well manage. She expressed herself thankful for this, however, in so far that it left her no time to think, and must be the excuse for her short and hurried communications. Christina thought these letters promising. Their bearing the marks of being written out of spirits was likely to be as much owing to her mother's state as to

her own regrets, but the very fact of her being glad to get away from her thoughts was a ground for hope in Christina's eyes. As time got on, and her mother mended, this would not be; her thoughts would leave her no rest then, and by degrees would prepare the ground for the seed she was determined to cast in. All dreams! It pleased God to take Mrs. Melton in a fortnight more, and then——. But we are advancing matters: by that time Herbert's own concerns in another direction had undergone an engrossing change, and Christina, bewildered by events which, following one on the heels of the other, upset each in their turn some one of her preconcerted schemes, was fain to wait a little before she prepared any fresh combination.

And before we proceed, as we shall do more rapidly than hitherto, to the narration of so much as remains of this history, shall we not, like Henry Motcombe, just glance at the lesson to be derived from the circumstances already recounted in these pages, with a view to our own warning, and that of those who think like us.

Henry Motcombe spoke of the danger of trifling with the affections of those we love; Dacre of that of trifling with one's own. They might both have united the two, and called it the danger of trifling with an attachment, whether in relation to our own share in it, or to that of the other party with whom it is shared. But we will go deeper. We will go to the root of that which was the cause of nearly every misfortune and regrettable coincidence recounted in these pages. In the persons of Emmy

and Herbert, we have touched upon it already. It was pride, and pride only, that caused all their unhappiness. But it was not only with them, nor is it only with the rest of our characters; it pervades the whole of society in its most intimate workings, whether it shew itself, as it does sometimes, in a commendable and recognised form, or whether in its worst and most reprehensible. The fact that it has a commendable form is the most dangerous feature about it. It deceives its votary, time after time, into the commission of sin, under the guise of what is noble, and laudable, and honourable. Here, for instance, is Nora Deane: the result of her pride we shall see shortly, if we have not guessed at it already. Her pride was first offended at her conduct being questioned in reference to young Wordsworth—a laudable feeling as far as it went; was then inflamed at her father's sweeping denunciation of him for a son-in-law, and so on; till the result was the same as when it actuated our first parents—disobedience.

It was the worst sort of pride which actuated old Mr. Harbottle in setting up his standard of doctrine against that of his spiritual pastors and masters; and it was its natural result, *disobedience* to the Church's laws, which caused him to absent himself from her services. We beg it to be understood that we are not now advocating extremes—we have endeavoured in this tale, and we hope successfully, to avoid the semblance of it—but we repeat that when, whether in High Church or Low Church, Puseyite or Evangelical, a private individual sets up his opinion against his ecclesiastical teachers, and severs himself from the

services because his point is not carried,—the first is the worst form of spiritual pride, and the second its natural result, *disobedience*. It matters not that the discipline of the Church has become now-a-days *de facto* a dead letter. Every good Churchman knows that it is implied still, and in his proper person acknowledges it; he knows that it supplies a remedy for all abuse of power, and if that remedy will not touch the particular complaint he has to make, he is content rather to doubt himself than the Church he serves. If people would but remember this, what heart-burnings would be spared! It is a golden text, that "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."

It was pride that caused Colonel Deane to resent Edwin Dacre's seasonable advice about the "Folly," which contributed, in some degree, to the untoward close of that day's festivity. It was pride which made Henry Motcombe shut out every friend from his heart, and thereby to entail upon himself double the amount of agony in the loss which we had so early to record in these pages. In his case this was the more unreasonable, because his own theory of working among his flock, and to carry out which he advocated a disused, and, to some, a most distasteful ordinance, was the systematic cultivation of those sympathies between them and their pastor which he so systematically ignored in his own person.

And so the ball rolls—the beam and the mote, the mote and the beam. Nearly every one of our characters saw the working of this evil in the other, but were blind to it in their own persons, because it ap-

peared not in the same shape. And it never will: when it does, it will cease to be the tempter's choicest weapon. Its value consists in the insidious manner in which he can employ it—in the deceit with which it allures his victims: it is, as it were, a standing lie, and in keeping with the duty he makes it perform.

Of all the characters it has been our fortune to depict, Christina Percy least possessed this fault. In her, if it ever got the ascendancy at all, it was but for a moment. She never thought of self; and pride cannot exist without self. Every motive, every action that we have recorded of her, shewed the same unselfish, thoughtful, pitying consideration for the welfare of others, even when her own sorrow was likely to follow on their success. The honest glance of that bright brown eye was the true index of the pure heart below—good, bright, sensitive, and forbearing. Though no early hope succeed, Wallflower, and every worldly castle crumble into dust; though regrets pain now, and the joy of others, the work of thine own exertions are just at this moment but a poor recompense for a heart wounded and torn in their behalf; yet some day a brighter reward than all will come. Every tear shed for another's woe, every hope renounced for another's joy, is a jewel in the crown which is waiting to encircle the foreheads of the just!

CHAPTER X.

THE CARNATION PLUCKED.

They sought her baith by bower and ha',—
The lady was not seen;
She's o'er the border and awa'
Wi' Jock o' Hazeldean!

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

IT must be acknowledged that, if Bishops Lamford was disinclined to forget the sad occurrence which had befallen it, it was not from any lack of counteracting excitement. Circumstances at this time occurred enough to turn the head of any sober-minded country town, even if no other had already happened to disturb its equanimity. So that if the serious visitation which Divine Providence had lately manifested in it was at times obliterated by the novelty and importance of other news, some little indulgence must be accorded to it. In the first place, on the very day after the conversation between Dacre and Motcombe recorded in the last chapter, Lamford had the misfortune to lose its Vicar. Early that morning an express from town summoned Mrs. Trentham and her daughter Clarinda to the bedside of the worthy Dr. Trentham, who had suddenly been stricken down by an apoplectic seizure, and another express later the same day brought the mournful intelligence to the remaining children, Sylvia and Lucy, that it had ended fatally. I do not know whether any of my

readers remember any similar locality where a like occurrence under such circumstances has fallen out, and whether the effect has been the same. Here in Lamford, the breath was scarcely out of the poor Vicar's body before the community were wasting theirs in canvassing the name of his probable successor; and Mr. Strong, in his position as senior curate, must needs forward another express to the college at Oxford, in whose gift the living lay, much as he would have done for a fire-engine, if the house in which his own precious person was deposited had taken fire, although there really was no pressing occasion for so precipitately communicating the intelligence. By others, University Calendars were consulted, surmises, forebodings, hopes and fears, duly started and weighed; and no doubt, at the ancient seat of learning itself, *one* common-room table at least thought the subject not unworthy of discussion over the post-prandial port. But, alas! the maxim, "*Le Roi est mort: vive le Roi*," does not hold good in these matters. In the case of Church livings there is invariably an interregnum, and in some instances a pretty long interregnum too: so that Lamford folk had no occasion to excite themselves on the subject. In one case in our experience, when the incumbent died, at the commencement of the long vacation, the college never moved in the matter till the following November; and though the name of the new nominee was known by the end of that month, the appointment was not made, for all practical purposes, till the close of the ensuing February. However, Lamford was in a ferment, and continued so until something rather more exciting occurred to divert its

attention; which luckily was not long, as the college did not proceed to consider the subject of preferring until after the Christmas recess. Nevertheless, just now the state of society in the village was particularly amusing. Every kind of rumour, true or not, gained credence, and excited the alarm or the gratification of differing parties. It was in vain that Mr. Strong—and no one knew better than he—assured the excited mind that nothing could be done at present. A mere suspicion of the probable new-comer was received as conclusive; and if a white cravat was discovered, which happened now and then, carelessly surveying the exterior of the church, or admiring the old ruin, the public imagination was at once lashed to the verge of insanity. The particular way, too, in which individuals regarded the matter was also diverting to a degree. Old Mr. Harbottle, for instance, strutted about with his head erect and an air of severe importance on his countenance, which was the very extreme of absurdity; and at every slight meeting of any members of the locality, accidental or otherwise, he could not help expressing his hope that the new Vicar would, at the outset, avow his determination to uphold the Protestant establishment. This behaviour on one occasion gave rise to a somewhat exciting passage of arms between himself and Mr. Strong, in which the peculiarities of the two were so absurdly contrasted, that many of the bystanders fairly laughed till they cried.

The event, too, had an effect in another direction. It was the cause of a battle-royal between Miss Bella Dillwyn and her devoted slave Mr. Hetherington. We have already adverted to the liking evinced by

the former, and the jealousy but too little concealed by the latter, towards the Rev. Henry Motcombe. In such a case, a man of the sense and discrimination of Mr. Hetherington ought to have known better: but he was in love, and what need we say more? Of course, therefore, on one subject he was as hasty, and capricious, and unreasonable as most men under such circumstances usually are. He must have known, had he reflected, that he had no cause for uneasiness in that quarter; and as a mere man of the world, he could have required little to assure him that the sure way to injure his cause with the lady was to vex her on the subject. However, he would not profit in this matter by such common sense as he possessed, and Bella, who, though as good a little girl as ever breathed, was not free from the infirmities of her sex, took advantage of his weakness, whenever he broached the unlucky subject, by avowing undisguisedly and warmly her partiality for the person he chose to consider as his rival. Thus on the present occasion, in discussing the possible changes which the advent of a new vicar might bring forth, Hetherington could not resist the temptation of a sneer at the regret which the loss of Henry Motcombe would cause, should he be superseded. To which Bella expressed her profound vexation that Mr. Motcombe was not old enough to have the living, which, after all, was a lucky coincidence, as the latter had never been a Fellow of the College at all, as it was. So that Hetherington might have spared himself the rejoinder which her reply immediately prompted; and a very pretty quarrel, that threatened for some time materially to damage every good

understanding between them, would thereby have been avoided.

But the curates, perhaps, were the only persons who really were likely to be sensibly affected by the change. Trevanion was apprehensive lest he should have to leave a spot where he had met with such uniform kindness. Henry Motcombe was bound to it by the remembrance of his lost Frederica, and by the feeling that with her remains close by, he in some sort possessed her indefinable presence ever near him. He was, moreover, much attached to the parish, in which he had laboured indefatigably and successfully. But he was at the same time a man of strongly and positively defined opinions,—call them extreme, if you will,—though he never employed them to offend or frighten; and it was impossible, therefore, in the present state of Church parties, not to fear that the new comer might be anything but desirous of retaining his services. The University Calendar, which he had consulted, suggested but little hope. Those next on the list for preferment consisted of men the very last to tolerate even the breath of his views; and he looked forward, therefore, to the future with anything but satisfaction. But perhaps the curate most to be pitied was poor Mr. Strong. His services, of course, would not be required, if the new vicar became resident (as there was no doubt but that he would). He had so long been the *de facto* vicar of the place, that it would be impossible for him to descend to a subordinate position in it. His labours therein, if not in all cases the best judged, had been discharged conscientiously and energetically; and his long residence

in the place had endeared it to him to such an extent, that to sever his connection with it would be almost equivalent to the breaking of one of life's ties. He certainly was to be pitied, and most of the circle in Lamford felt this, and testified it more or less warmly. All at present was, however, uncertainty and doubt, which was not likely to be removed, at all events, for some months to come.

But there were yet other circumstances to rouse the quiet little town of much more serious import than even its Vicar's death, and to one of these we must turn our serious attention.

It has already been mentioned what line Mr. Percy, on Herbert's behalf, had begged the attorneys to the executors of Admiral Ayscough to pursue respecting Mr. Scratton's letter. Both they, as well as Mr. Percy, were of opinion that it was unadvisable, for the sake of all parties, to agitate the matter, and therefore there was little difficulty in getting all of them to consent to wait until Mr. Scratton's arrival, before anything on the subject was made public. Now all this was very well, assuming the position that Mr. Scratton had communicated with no one else, to be a correct one. But this was not so. He had mentioned the matter, as a very singular complication, to a private friend in Sydney. That friend had taken his passage to England by the very "Marco Polo," the fast sailer mentioned in Mr. Scratton's letter. No immediate result had followed from his arrival in England, but after the lapse of some ten days, when he had had time to settle the more urgent of his private affairs, some casual circumstances recalled it to

his recollection, and he mentioned it again as a secret to a private friend of his own, who communicated it to Edward Wordsworth at Natchetts, just two days after the news of the Vicar's death arrived. To make the matter plainer, it will be as well to give some idea of the terms in which this important revelation was made to Edward Wordsworth. The writer, after recounting the circumstances of his conversation with Mr. Scratton's friend, proceeded to state that Mr. Scratton was on his voyage home with a will of late date, which gave the Bickerton property to his brother, the youngest Mr. Wordsworth. Attached to this, there were other heavy bequests in which doubtless he, Edward, would share; but the writer counselled him not to move in the matter, save by secretly taking his measures for the future, as the executors, he knew, were in possession of full information, and their silence looked very much as if they intended to dispute the new will.

Now this letter was full of repetitions, and any one reading some of them without perusing the context, might be easily led to believe that *Edward* was the person mentioned to be beneficially interested, and not his younger brother *Edmund*. Of this circumstance our scamp availed himself. His position, from this letter, explained itself in a moment, and if he had any chance of Nora Deane's hand, it must be made safe now. There is no reason to doubt that, after his selfish fashion, he was attached to this young lady: he was really fond of her. But in a man whose principles have been for years relaxed by ill-regulated habits, attachments of the strongest sort

do not always promise a lasting continuance. The general restlessness which irregular habits and irregular thoughts always bring with them, is quite as disastrous to the strength of true affection as it is to all attempts at regular employment. Intensity at first in the one, and a burning assiduity at first in the other, is prone to give way to a corresponding reaction, and then the former palls just as the latter gets fatigued. However, it is not our intention to depreciate the warmth of Edward Wordsworth's better feelings. He loved Nora, doubtless, dearly. That his worldly prospects were now quite gone, and that she, in the common course of things, would inherit a good round sum from her father, made her not the less desirable in his eyes.

But her father never would consent to her marrying him, that was quite clear. He had said so to his daughter in terms sufficiently plain, and his conduct even to him on some occasions, when he had seemed rather attentive to Nora, had been anything but equivocal. Edward, indeed, rather doubted whether the possession of Bickerton, with the position it would give, would advance his interests one jot in this respect. But now that this hope, to which he had clung with the tenacity of fatalism, was disappearing, his loss of her presented itself before him as an absolute certainty, unless he could induce her to marry him secretly.

It should be mentioned, that a day or two after the accident at the "Mouse," Nora and Edward had come to what is commonly called among young people an understanding; that is to say, they had exchanged

vows. Edward's were rather of an exuberant, wild, disposing-of-every-obstacle kind. Nora's were, on the contrary, of the conditional sort, at first suggestive of a parent's consent, and of difficulties being overcome by patience,— a commodity, by-the-bye, of which she hardly possessed two grains herself. Well, this was all very well, as long as it lasted, and the two discussed together all sorts of impossible prospects; and as their love waxed warmer, and the sky of those halcyon days grew brighter too for them, difficulties seemed to wane, and hope to increase, and Nora's heart and principles became gradually relaxed enough for the persuasion which was to be employed upon them before long.

Well, the whole place was full of the news of the Vicar's death, and its consequent probabilities, and the letter we have already adverted to had duly been received by Edward. There was no time to be lost. Scratton might turn up any day, nay, that very afternoon. He sought Nora. Circumstances favoured him: the coast was clear, and he got half-an-hour's quiet conversation with her that morning. The first point was to explain to her that he was to be the future possessor of Bickerton—which he was not; but never mind, according to his fashion of reading it, so the letter said. At first, Nora was incredulous, but having read herself the first part of the letter, which was all plain sailing enough, her own sanguine temperament soon filled up the rest; and she was in an ecstacy of delight. The remaining parts she hardly cared to look at. "Bickerton is left to young Mr. Wordsworth," were words she just saw; (they were

a quotation of Scratton's own expression,) — what more did she care to know?

But during all her exultation, her lover's face wore an aspect of deep despondency, contrasting (it would have done so to a bystander) laughably with her beaming countenance.

"Why, Edward, you do not seem pleased at your good fortune."

"No! I consider it my death-blow."

"Your death-blow!"

"Yes! we shall be parted now. Your father will never allow me near the house, because I shall have money and power to back my demand."

"Perhaps he will give in now."

"Why, how can you say so?" said the lover, petulantly: "What was it that you told me he said to you—'If I was the lord of—how many Bickertons was it?'—he would not consent."

Nora's cheek blanched as she remembered those terrible words, and the energy with which they were uttered. "Then you think there is no hope left?" she said, as suddenly cast down as her warm temperament had been excited rapidly.

"There is only one hope, Nora," he replied, "and that will make you angry, if I mention it. So for me, indeed, there is no hope."

Nora's head drooped, while a burning blush spread over her face and neck. She did not answer.

"Nora, do you doubt me?"

She shook her head, while a tear fell on his sleeve. It would have been better, perhaps, if she had.

"It is our only chance," he said: "if I once get

acknowledged as the inheritor of this place, we are done. If we were married first, the Colonel would have no help for it but to come round; and surely, under the circumstances, who would sympathize with him until he did?"

But Nora made no reply,—still the drooping head, the burning blush, and ever and anon the passing tear.

He tried one more argument.

"If I asked you to do this, the beggar that I was, you might well hesitate: it would be wicked and selfish in me to take you to certain poverty. But now I offer you a home; I offer you that which your father would gladly leap at if offered by another, and which he only would refuse in me from mere prejudice. Supposing him angry when it all comes out, who is there that will think with him?"

"I am his only daughter, Edward," said the poor girl, raising her head, and fixing her full deep eyes on the young man's face.

There was something that struck a chord in his bosom at this speech, into which it was a pity he did not stop to enquire. But he had been too unused to be checked in any object he had in hand, to allow himself to be diverted from his purpose then, and therefore replied quickly,—"Do I wish to change the relationship? Will not your position as my wife bring him some gratification when these absurd prejudices are at an end, as they will be when he sees that the time has gone by for indulging them?"

But Nora still remained silent.

"Look you, Nora," pursued the young man, with

greater vivacity, as he remarked that his arguments did not carry the weight with them he had expected, —"look you, Nora, fully at the issue of the step I ask you to take, and not at the step itself merely. Suppose me to be what I was before this letter came, —frowned upon, poor—more, almost penniless—and suppose me to have asked you to take this step under those circumstances: the issue in that case, I willingly allow, would have involved fearful consequences. Your father, with justice, might have enlarged, not only on your disobedience, but on your conduct in allying yourself to beggary, and, if he liked to say so, in demeaning his name by a low connexion. But in the present instance all that is removed. For the match itself, it is one he might be proud of; and the blame, therefore, that can attach to you can be but temporary."

"But the disobedience, Edward!" said Nora, eagerly: "I grant you all the rest,—only remove the feeling of that, and I am content."

"Nora, is the happiness of a life worth no risk, no sacrifice? I concede that the step is an act of disobedience,—but for what, and for whom? and what is the alternative if it be not incurred? It is disobedience of an arbitrary command, a command which the Colonel will thank you some day for disobeying. Daughters are forgiven these things every day, when they have not even the excuse that you have."

Nora covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out light from her brain. Then removing them as quickly, she said hurriedly, "When do you wish this to be,—quick?"

"My own Nora!" he said, pressing her to his heart in his delight.

"Say quickly, Edward," she said, almost repulsing him, to get an answer to her question; "if it is to be done at all, it must be soon. You must not leave me time to think, or my heart will fail me."

This was rather a puzzler for her lover. Her readiness now embarrassed him almost as much as her backwardness had chilled him before. He must get up to town for the license; to try and procure one hereabouts would upset the whole scheme.

"I have time now to catch the fast train, dearest," he said, "and to manage all that is necessary in town, as well as to see the writer of this, and that all is right, and to get back to-night."

"Well, but when do you intend it to be, and where?" she again asked, impatiently.

"I can manage everything for us to get off by the early train in the morning," he replied: "we shall be in town by the hour they all get to breakfast, and married quietly in London by the time they begin to have an idea of the truth."

Nora reflected a moment, and then, turning to the tempter, she said in a soft, affectionate tone, exquisitely touching, "Oh! Edward, I hope you will never give me cause to repent what I am doing for you. I do hope that you will strive and earn a good opinion in the world now, for my sake, even if you are careless to do so for your own. It will be very, very bitter for me until all this is made straight, and my dear father welcomes me to his arms again: but I will ever wear a smile for you, and stifle all cruel recol-

lections for you, if I only know that you will do this for me."

A more hardened profligate than Edward Wordsworth might have been moved by this, and it is, therefore, doing him no more than justice to say that he was sensibly touched by her affection; but all his emotion he suffered to evaporate in a gush of tenderness for her, instead of laying it to heart, and letting it work a little compunction as to the cruel wrong he was about to do her. Of course the promise was given: whether it was kept in the manner she meant, it is hard for us to say; for circumstances turned out so widely different to what he had led her to expect, that perhaps she herself might be disposed to allow that he had it not in his power to redeem the pledge, in the meaning in which she had exacted it from him.

But no time was to be lost on his part, if the design was to be adhered to which he had just vaguely sketched out. Leaving word that he was called to town for the day on business, he was off at once to save the fast train, which would alone bring him into town time enough to arrange the necessary preliminaries. As he travelled, a cruel uncertainty pursued him in respect to Mr. Scratton's arrival: what if he should be already in town?—if he perhaps were at this moment to be travelling to Lamford with the executors of the old will, to shew the new one to Capel?—what if he should return in the evening to hear his younger brother proclaimed as the successor to Bickerton, and himself sneered at by the Colonel and disgraced by his daughter? However, the die was

cast, and he must trust to the luck which for a time Satan always reserves for his votaries, to carry him through. And it was indeed the luck of a hair's breadth. Mr. Scratton had arrived in England, was, at the moment when Edward was procuring a marriage-license, actually in consultation with the executors of the former will and their attorneys, and by that very night's post a letter was despatched to Mr. Percy, arranging for all these gentlemen to come down on the morrow to Lamford, to see Mr. Herbert Capel in person, with a view of settling amicably and without expense a claim which, if contested, would be productive of no good to any one but the lawyers.

Mr. Scratton adopted this course from a feeling of commiseration for Herbert, and also because of the very high opinion he knew the late Admiral entertained of him. If, as there was no reason to doubt, he was inclined to yield up possession of the estate, Mr. Scratton would use his best offices with Mr. Edmund Wordsworth, whom he reported to be a mild, kindly-disposed young man, to spare Herbert's feelings as much as possible in the surrender, as well as to press his rights, so far as they had been infringed upon during the past year, as liberally as possible.

By ten o'clock on the following morning the "Carnation" had been transplanted from the flower-beds at Natchetts.

CHAPTER XI.

FLED.

Here's a parchment with the seal of Cæsar;
I found it in his closet,—'tis his will.
. . . . . .
4th Citizen. We'll hear the will—read it.—SHAKESPEARE.

Gone to be married! IBID.

As Herbert and Dacre were driving down into Lamford on the following most eventful morning, being summoned thereto by a message from Mr. Percy, it was impossible not to notice from that part of the road which formed the boundary to the domain of Natchetts, that something very extraordinary was going forward within it. Grooms starting off hurriedly in different directions, various domestics dreadfully busy in running about bareheaded, with no ostensible object, and, finally, as they passed the gates, the old Colonel himself visible in the distance at the corner of the shrubbery, engaged in shouting vociferously, suggested the idea at first, according to Dacre, that the kitchen chimney, at least, must have taken fire. But as no other smoke was visible save the dust which these different parties were kicking up, Herbert was not impressed with that view. However, his own affairs just at present occupied his mind too much to allow this scene to produce more than a passing effect; and even had this been otherwise, the sight of Kemp a few minutes afterwards in

its bower of flowers, looking the picture of smiling tranquillity, would have suggested other reflections.

So Natchetts was soon forgotten, and a little later they were at Mr. Percy's office, when the subject they had come upon usurped the place of every other topic.

The gentlemen from London connected with the execution of the old and the new wills of the late Admiral Ayscough were not expected down till twelve, and now it was little more than ten; but Mr. Percy wished to see Herbert beforehand, in order to debate any little point which might have suggested itself in the interim since their last conversation, and which it might be too late to discuss quietly afterwards. There was none, however; Herbert had made up his mind to an unqualified surrender, in case the document in Mr. Scratton's possession turned out what it purported to be, and the time and the mode of doing so would be subjects for subsequent consideration. The letters Mr. Percy had received that morning were then duly read and commented on, and until the appointed hour there was little more to be done.

Meanwhile, Henry Motcombe, perceiving Herbert's phaeton outside the attorney's door, knocked for admission. He was, of course, welcomed heartily, but he did not come upon the matter they had in hand.

"Have you heard what has happened?" he said, rather hurriedly.

"You know, Mr. Motcombe," said Mr. Percy, in his most oily tones, "that so many things have happened lately that——."

"Yes, yes," replied the Curate; "I don't refer to any of them. This, which has just occurred, is a very

serious—a very unfortunate business. You are evidently all in the dark. Miss Deane has eloped with Mr. Wordsworth."

A light broke through Herbert's mind as to the scene they had witnessed in the park that morning. "Why, what on earth made him do that?" said Mr. Percy.

"I can only account for it by his having an inkling that he was to be the future possessor of Bickerton," said Motcombe, "and presuming on his fortune——"

"But he is not to be the future possessor of Bickerton," cried Herbert; "it is his younger brother who succeeds."

"Besides that such a step would be quite contrary to all experience of human nature, if he were," said Dacre.

Motcombe looked surprised for a moment, and the whole party regarded each other with wonder. "Perhaps he has been deceived," said the Curate, at length; "perhaps he has been told that he is the actual owner, and has taken this step in consequence. Poor fellow, poor fellow!"

"No, no! that won't do," said Dacre; "very charitable of you, Motcombe, but it won't do. No man ever ran away with a girl clandestinely when he was in possession of a large fortune to back his claim. It looks to me as if he had not been deceived, as if he knew the whole truth, and as if this was the only chance open to him to secure the young lady as well as the fortune she may reasonably expect to have from her father."

"That is it, you may depend upon it," said Mr. Percy.

"I should hardly like to judge so ill of any man, with nothing more to ground my opinion upon than mere conjecture," said Motcombe, seriously. "Capel, can I have a word with you?"

Herbert retired with him into a recess by the window. "Capel," he said, "you have it now in your power to do a great and good action, one worthy to crown your useful and successful occupation of yonder estate. The Colonel thinks very highly of you, and would listen to what you said more than to any man in the place. He is in a terrible way just now—almost beside himself. Will you go up to Natchetts? see him, and calm him, and put in a good word for the young people, or, at all events, for his daughter? It will never do for that fine-hearted girl to be left solely to the care of such a man as her husband without another tie to look to."

Herbert had been regarding him steadily during the whole of this speech. "I should see no objection if it were not for the appearance it involved of interfering in his concerns," he answered.

"There is no fear of that. The circumstance is all over Lamford; he makes no secret of it himself, but keeps telling every one he sees that she shall never 'darken his doors again.'"

"Where is he now?"

"Up at Natchetts. But there have been plenty of people to see him, attracted by curiosity and the news of the elopement, and what not."

"I had better go up, then, at once. After twelve o'clock I may be engaged for the whole afternoon."

"I wish you would," said Motcombe.

Herbert consented, and after telling Dacre and Mr. Percy that he should be with them at the appointed hour, he betook himself at once to Natchetts.

The Colonel was alone, sitting in the room he called his library, with an ominous frown upon his face, which, with the colour called up by recent passion on his cheek, made his countenance the reverse of agreeable. He rose and welcomed Herbert with more warmth than one would have thought he could then have called up on any other subject than the one nearest his heart.

"You know, I suppose?" he said, enquiringly.

Herbert nodded.

"But why should I ask?" said the old man, angrily, "when I have been purposely bruiting it about myself."

"I came," said Herbert, who hardly knew how to begin his mission comfortably, "not from any great idea that I could be of use, but because I heard that others had been here already. I did not like to be backward in offering my sympathy, too, in such a case, Colonel."

"And it is more acceptable than that of all the rest," said the old man, with emotion, and grasping Herbert's hand. "Come, sit down, and advise me, for this matter has sent me all abroad."

"I wish I could say anything likely to improve matters," said Herbert; "but I think that merely talking of an affliction sometimes brings relief."

"Affliction!" said the Colonel, shading his eyes with his hand; "Ah! it is an affliction: may you never know the like."

"We have all our afflictions," said Herbert.

"That is a stupid old woman's remark, which I should not have expected from a man of your power," said the Colonel. "As if others' afflictions were ever like our own."

"Perhaps not," replied Herbert; "but the fact that others are in a similar strait often makes our own sit more lightly. Now, if you had heard that I had met also with a severe disaster, what would you say?"

"Say! why, that next to myself, I would sooner that it had fallen upon any other man!" replied the Colonel.

"Well, that shews that you would be interested in it, and that interest would serve to draw away some of the distress which you are now feeling. Bickerton has changed hands again, Colonel!"

The old man looked up with an astonishment so real that Herbert was convinced that his argument was a sound one.

"How? You have not been——?" The first idea that suggested itself to the Colonel was that Herbert had been gambling, and had lost the estate. He seemed to be unable to account for so extraordinary an announcement, except by some equally extraordinary cause.

"I have not been doing anything," said Herbert. "Another will has been found, of later date than the one under which I claim, and that leaves the property to another."

"Not to that scoundrel," cried the Colonel, jumping up from his chair, and gesticulating violently: "don't say it is left to that scoundrel; I would sooner

see my daughter a beggar than that her husband should acquire wealth at such a cost."

"No, Colonel; Bickerton goes, I believe, to his younger brother," said Herbert. "However, the disaster is the same to me, is it not? And though, for reasons into which it is unnecessary for me to enter, I may not feel it in the light that others would, yet it is not in itself less a misfortune, or one that claims less sympathy for me at the hands of those who are my friends."

"My poor young man," said the kind-hearted Colonel, taking Herbert's hand between his two own hardened palms, "what a shocking blow!"

"Such as it is, Colonel," replied Herbert, gently, "so it must be borne, and I must be thankful for the benefits and advantages that my good fortune has been productive of so far. But it goes to teach us this, that we are never alone in sorrow; and that though one may be struck in a tenderer point than another, yet he has something to alleviate the blow which the other has not. My disaster is for 'aye;' it is not so hard a one that it may not be borne, but it cannot be retrieved; yours, though more severe in its immediate action, offers points of consolation. Will you do me a kindness, Colonel?"

"Will I not?"

"Will you, when your daughter comes to you for forgiveness, bear in mind that the day she left you was the day that fortune left me, and that, whereas I can never possess again what has fled from me, God gives back in some sort her who has fled from you?"

"She was my only daughter, Capel. She never

left my side, even for education. She never was refused a thing she asked for. Her mother now lies upstairs ill from her misconduct. If I do not grant your request readily, it is because the 'bite of the serpent's tooth' heals not so quickly."

"I do not expect that you can grant it to-day, even if it were likely to be put to the proof. All I ask is, that you will *remember* this. It is, perhaps, my last request, and I will trust to the result, if you will only remember it."

"I will promise so far," said the Colonel, after a pause; "I cannot give any pledge of what I shall or shall not say to that man when I see him, and I hope he will give me no opportunity of saying anything for some time to come. But when my daughter presents herself for forgiveness, I promise, that in remembrance of all the good you have done here, in remembrance of the brave example you have left us, in remembrance of the sympathy you have come to shew for me on the day when your own misfortunes were crowding thick upon you, I promise, that when my daughter comes, my door shall not be shut against her."

The old man sunk back, overpowered by his emotions; but as quickly recovered himself, and justified all Herbert had said at the commencement of the interview by immediately reverting to the other's misfortune.

"But, Capel, though you are lost to Bickerton, you must not be lost to Lamford; there is not a person in this place who would not be glad to have you, if you chose to take up your abode with them, high or low."

"I hope, indeed," said Herbert, "that my connec-

tion with your town will not be altogether severed; but how often, or when I shall be able to revisit it, I cannot tell. I must have other aims now, and how much they will claim me, of course I have no means as yet of forming an opinion."

"I fear that associations will keep you from us altogether," said the Colonel.

"No!" replied Herbert; "believe me, not. I have no associations here but what should draw me to the place. The loss of this estate does not affect me as much as it might have done if I had not other things weighing upon my heart, and therefore no memory on that score will keep me away."

"I trust indeed not, nor any other," returned the old man, warmly. "Here you are always welcome, asked or not; remember that."

Herbert thanked him in the same strain, saying that he must now go and meet those who were coming down with the will; and having promised to see him again before he left the country, took his departure. The old man looked at him sadly from his windows as he walked down the drive; he seemed to have lost the only consolation he had had in his affliction.

The promised comers arrived at the appointed time. They consisted of Mr. Scratton, a short little man with a sunburnt face that shewed the traveller, and a quick restless habit of speaking and acting which denoted the man constantly on the move; of Mr. Bulteel, the junior partner of the firm, who had acted for the executors; and of those executors themselves, two naval gentlemen, upon whom the greatest praise we can bestow is that, with one or two exceptions, they most

sagaciously held their tongues during the whole of the proceedings.

These gentlemen were duly presented to Herbert and Dacre, who was also of the party; and Mr. Scratton in particular tried to convey to the former his satisfaction at making his acquaintance, and his regret at being the bearer of a document which was to act so prejudicially on his fortunes; all of which he doubtless felt, but which nevertheless, in the jerky, restless manner in which he delivered it, had rather a comical effect than otherwise.

Matters had gone thus far, when the parties composed themselves for business; that is to say, they each took seats indicated to them by Mr. Percy, and commenced staring at each other. The business itself was initiated by Mr. Scratton, after about five minutes of this process, who, drawing a parchment from his pocket, delivered himself of this observation:—

"Mr. Bulteel suggested to me in the train, that the most regular way of opening this matter would be that I should first produce the will. Here it is. And my suggestion now upon that is, that as I have produced it, he reads it."

Capel could hardly help smiling, for half the beauty of this speech was the manner in which it was uttered, and offered no objection, as anything, however dreary, would, in his impatient state of mind, be better than a document enunciated by Mr. Percy, whose mode of delivery would probably render an adjournment necessary before the truth of the will could possibly be arrived at.

Mr. Bulteel, being nothing loth, commenced reading

the will; and being a sharp practical attorney, who knew the value of time, and who had some score of clients at that very moment on the verge of sacrificing his clerks in the office in town because they could not get speech with him, performed the task in a reasonably short time.

The results of this document were these:—

1. Completely to render of none effect the will which had placed Herbert at Bickerton.

2. To vest the Bickerton estates in Mr. Edmund Wordsworth, the blind brother, and to tie them up therein so completely, that Edward, the elder, could derive no present nor prospective benefit from them, excepting from a—

3. Charge by way of annuity of £200, similar to the one reserved to him by the first will.

4. There was one further charge of annuity of £400 to Mr. Herbert Capel, as if by way of amends for his loss as compared with the former will.

Besides this, there were bequests to old friends, servants, &c., most of which were similar in tenor to those which had been already satisfied.

After the will had been duly read, some discussion ensued between the attorneys upon the mode in which the will had been executed, which was put a stop to by Herbert distinctly assuring them that he would receive no advantage from mere technical objections, and that as Mr. Scratton was himself one of the witnesses, no further opposition on his part would be made to the will being duly proved; which called forth a practical demonstration of approbation on the part of Mr. Scratton.

This matter, indeed, of which there had been made such a parade, seemed thus very easily disposed of. Mr. Scratton offered to call himself that evening on Mr. Edmund Wordsworth, with the tidings of his good fortune, and also to pave the way to an equitable understanding between him and Herbert. The latter requested early information as to that gentleman's intentions and wishes with respect to Bickerton, when it was desired that he should move out, and what compensation would be required for his acts and occupation hitherto; all which Mr. Scratton undertook should be furnished him without delay.

And thus the business of the day seemed brought to a close, and the attorneys were echoing each other's words,—"Then I think there is nothing more," when one of the navy captains, after a whisper with his comrade, delivered himself of this oracular sentiment:—

"Indemnity!"

"Ah! dear me, I quite forgot," said Mr. Bulteel; "how very stupid of me, to be sure! The late executors very naturally expect to be indemnified for all they have done."

"Well, that Mr. Capel will do," said Mr. Percy, "by making himself the defendant in any action brought against the executors in respect of anything done on the Bickerton estate."

This did not, however, seem satisfactory to the naval gentlemen, both of whom again got rid of the ominous word.

"Indemnity!" said one.

"Indemnity!" whispered the other, an octave lower.

"It appears to me that these gentlemen," said Bulteel,—of course it did, as he was acting for them, —"have a right to the protection they require; but as Mr. Scratton thinks it more than probable that the new owner will require no compensation at all for what has been done the last ten months, it would, perhaps, be better for us to await the issue of his interview in that quarter, as it may make a material difference in the nature of the instrument we may require at Mr. Capel's hands."

This idea seemed to satisfy all parties for the time, excepting the naval gentlemen, who had clearly digested the one idea of indemnity, and could hardly be persuaded to move from their seats until it was certain that they would get it in some shape or other. This over, the meeting separated—Dacre and Herbert proceeding to Bickerton, Mr. Scratton, Mr. Bulteel and their party, to an hotel to luncheon, and thereupon back again to town.

It was Herbert's desire that the issue of this meeting should be generally known as soon as was possible after it broke up. He had no wish to be acknowledged master at Bickerton one moment after it was understood by the parties to it that he was not so; and Henry Motcombe, therefore, as well as Dacre, received his orders to spread the news without delay. Of course it spread through the town rapidly enough; but for all that, it was some time before the inhabitants generally could be made to comprehend its meaning. There was something so sudden, so far-fetched, indeed so improbable, in the whole story,

that the better-educated part of the population at first refused to credit it. When, however, it had been explained in as succinct and practical a form as the subject admitted of, to some of the most influential, and by them imparted to the main body at large, it seemed to have precisely the contrary effect to that expected. As long as the matter seemed incomprehensible, people were glad enough of any shape which would make it intelligible; but the moment it was received as an acknowledged fact, and put into a shape capable of being understood by the simplest minds, the whole community, as if by magic, with one consent set to work to mystify one another, and to render the whole story far more difficult of being comprehended than it had been at first. Before nightfall, the most ridiculous versions of it had been put about by the old ladies and gossips. The way these were manufactured was by the simple process of blending the elopement of Nora Deane with the misfortunes of Herbert Capel, and confusing the villany of one of the brothers Wordsworth with the good fortune of the other. The changes that could be rung upon such an arrangement of course were many; and consequently Lamford, on this occasion, was visited with a pretty considerable flight of what are called now-a-days "*Canards.*"

It would be out of the question to follow the effect of the news of Herbert's sudden reverse through even those families who have played prominent parts in this history. It will be sufficient to say, that at first incredulity, and then the most unfeigned regret, evidenced in each case according to the characteristics of the

particular sympathizer, pervaded nearly every rank of society. Herbert had not only commanded the respect of the inhabitants, but had obtained a hold on their feelings. We see this in some men, though outwardly they do nothing at all to accomplish it more than others. People like them, though they would find it difficult to tell you for what,—just as in this instance Lamford had accepted Herbert as a part of itself, and this misfortune to him was felt by many as a misfortune to themselves. And so people shook their heads, and said "it was a sad thing," and that "it would be a loss indeed to the place, Mr. Capel's going,"—and so on: and indeed he was a loss, though not in the way people meant. A high-spirited, honest, well-bred man, of high attainments and fascinating manners, is a loss to any community when he leaves it, be it large or small.

But we must devote a few words to the effect the news had at Kemp. When Henry Motcombe broke it, as he did the same evening, to Christina alone, it fairly took her breath away; and had not the former been in Herbert's confidence respecting his love affair with Mignonette, there is no knowing what construction he might not have put on Wallflower's demeanour. In truth, the latter was never so completely taken aback by any intelligence in her days, and really, for some time, she could say nothing but—"Tell me again, or I shall think I am dreaming." When the intelligence was thoroughly laid to heart, her first thought was for Herbert, her second for Madame d'Aulaincourt, and the effect it might be expected to produce upon her.

"Poor fellow!" she said; "what a terrible reverse. How does he bear it, Mr. Motcombe?"

"Well, as he does everything," was the reply; "he appears cheerful under it; but then he has been prepared for it these ten days. Under any circumstances, knowing what I do, I do not think he would have been affected much by it now."

Christina easily understood what that meant.

"What a blessing it is that some provision is left him," she said, after a pause.

"Yes, that is a source of great thankfulness. Not that I think that he would have been more disposed to repine, or less disposed to work, if there had not been. In the latter respect, I think his ten months of prosperity has done him good. With the materials for examining his own powers which it has supplied him, it has also taught him how much is expected from their proper use, whether in an exalted or an ordinary station. I have no fear now of his ever falling into the faults which marked his career before, when he was poor."

"Heaven prosper him!" said Christina, her eye kindling; "he has a great and noble soul."

"What do you propose to do about telling Madame d'Aulaincourt?" said Motcombe.

"That crossed my mind just now, while I was speaking," replied Christina; "I shall not tell her to-night; indeed, I hardly know whether I shall break it to her for some days,—it will shock her so terribly; and she still remains very ill. I must leave it to Dr. Crompton."

"Oh, pray don't!" said the Curate; "he is so very

injudicious. Trust to his advice as to when you ought to tell her, but do not let him have anything to do with the telling it."

"That is just what I meant," returned Christina: "you see that Madame d'Aulaincourt was always very fond of Mr. Capel; and since his efforts about poor Cecile, she speaks of him with an affection which could not be exceeded if he was her son. She told me the other night that she should have liked Cecile to have recovered her senses, if it were only for a few moments, just to have been able to know who it was that rescued her from the water."

"Poor, kind lady!" said Motcombe; "you will do wisely, indeed, Miss Percy, in timing your communication well. I should put the servants on their guard, too. I will let you know anything that I hear about the time of Capel's departure. Good-night."

The report from Mr. Scratton of his interview with Mr. Edmund Wordsworth added another surprise to the many surprises of this eventful time. The latter expressed great commiseration for Mr. Capel and the unlucky mistake that had befallen him. So far from thinking of calling him to account for his wrongful occupation, or asking for compensation in respect of anything done during it, — from all he heard, he believed that that occupation had been beneficial to the estate, and that, if anything, he himself was the debtor in that respect. He also expressed his wish of forming Mr. Capel's acquaintance without delay, that he might learn from his lips all the improvements he had made, as well as those he proposed making, at Bickerton, with a view of carrying them

out himself. He wished no good work which Mr. Capel had inaugurated to be lost to the neighbourhood. Finally, he gave orders to his lawyers to prepare deeds, indemnifying both Mr. Capel and the late executors for all that they had done under the former will. Acting on the advice of Dacre and Mr. Percy, Herbert, on the receipt of this news, set off for town, to confer with Mr. Wordsworth in person.

CHAPTER XII.

A RAY OF LIGHT.

The queen is proud on her throne,
  And proud are her maids so fine,
But the proudest lady that ever was known,
  Is a little lady of mine.
    And oh! she flouts me, she flouts me,
    And spurns, and scorns, and doubts me;
    Though I drop on my knee and sue for grace,
    And beg and beseech with the saddest face,
    Still ever the same she doubts me.—T. Westwood.

Our reader must now be good enough to allow us to transport him somewhat hurriedly over the next five weeks, the circumstances of which will require but a short notice at our hands. Herbert's visit to Mr. Edmund Wordsworth proved in every way propitious. He found his successor a mild, kindly disposed young man, whom a good providence, as if in amends for the one great affliction which it had set upon him, had endowed with many excellent, if not brilliant, qualities. He shewed very great commiseration for the unfortunate position in which the discovery of the new will had placed Herbert, and seemed both astonished and delighted at the fortitude with which he appeared to bear his reverse. His great desire seemed to be to follow as much as he could in the latter's steps at Lamford. "It will be a sad ex-

change for them, Mr. Capel," he said; "but if I cannot remind them of you in every way, I will, at all events, try to do so in some degree, by following in your footsteps." He seemed terribly grieved at his brother's elopement with Miss Deane. "That alone," he said, "will raise a prejudice against me, which, with my sad physical infirmity, I shall find it next to impossible to overcome." One point debated between them was the time necessary for Herbert to make his arrangements for quitting Bickerton. This young Wordsworth offered to fix at three months, but on Herbert's representing that half that time would be more than sufficient, the period was reduced to six weeks.

And yet there are a few circumstances to be recounted as having occurred during the first five weeks of this period, nevertheless. The first should be the death of Mrs. Melton. The news of this event reached Christina before she could make up her mind to write to Emmy on the change that had taken place at Bickerton; and now, of course, her disinclination to do so was still further increased. She was much annoyed at this. An ever restless desire to be advancing Herbert's interests was pressing her on one side, and a dread of injuring them by precipitation, or by advocating them at an improper moment, was harassing her on the other. She let, therefore, nearly three weeks elapse before writing on this subject; and when she did, she wrote in the hope that she had not done wrong in withholding the news; as she thought that, with her other sorrows, it would be a too severe blow for Emmy to bear. "Not," she continued, "that I think it will be the less shocking to you now, but I

could not make up my mind to say anything to aggravate feelings already sufficiently painful. And yet, my dear Emmy, as out of most evils, I do cling to the hope that good may spring from this. I desire nothing in the world so much as to see you and one other happy: I would fain listen to a whisper in my breast, that now fortune has fled from him, now that he is forlorn and deserted, that heart will be found true enough to *itself* to come and console and comfort him for life."

To which Emmy replied, among other things:—

"To all your kind expressions about Herbert and me, I hardly know what answer to give. I dread to pain you, and yet I cannot disguise the truth. I fear to incur the opinion at your hands of being obstinate, and perverse, and relentless; and yet if I did not say what I felt, I should be deceiving my best and truest friend. The time has gone by for me, Christina, for the realization of any worldly hope I once had. To console and comfort is, indeed, my vocation; but it is to do so to those at home, and not abroad. When God took my dearest mother, He left me a duty to perform, from which I cannot, if I would, look away. My place is that which my mother once occupied at my father's side: he would be helpless without me; with me he is strong. There are hundreds looking to him for advice and instruction; were I to withdraw, I should take with me his power of giving it. But even were this not so, the time is past for me for even thinking of those hopes to which not a year ago I clung so fondly. What the cause of this is, I cannot enquire; and as, when I have essayed to enquire,

the attempt has filled me with an indefinable dread, I have given up doing so. All I know is, that I cannot look backwards; and that when I look forwards, it is as if I looked above some deep opaque mist, through an atmosphere which it makes the eyes and the heart light to gaze through. 'God bless Herbert' is my daily prayer. And if you ever speak to him about me, say what I told you to say when I left; and besides, that I never think of him but in connection with those happy days which, though tinged at times with regrets, are still the brightest memories in my life."

This letter set Christina thinking. It seemed clear that either Mignonette was ill, or giving way a little under a long course of over-exertion or affliction. To see Herbert now, however, was her great aim, to confer with him about it, to unite her plans to his, and make one great effort to save her to him. She had, from the habit of reflecting on this plan for weeks, quite forgotten that there might be difficulty in getting Herbert to open his heart to her at all; quite forgotten that he might by this time have treated his affection and its sorrows as a sealed book, which nothing but the most urgent pressure would induce him to re-open. Her sanguine temperament had got over all intervening difficulties, and had left her nothing to look at, but the one main obstacle which Emmy's obdurate, determined opposition held out.

And she was right in this. In all combats in this world, the knot that ties up the main approach is the one to be cut, and not the little entanglements that lie near to it. Happy he who can so grapple with his destiny as to face the main impediment without

being diverted from it by vain and fanciful obstacles of a comparatively harmless kind!

To meet Herbert, however, seemed daily a more difficult and unattainable object. Since Cecile's death she had not had speech with him, and it augured little for her success when she should see him, that he had never been near her, or had made an effort to be put in possession of that message, which she wrote to him on the day of Emmy's departure that she had had entrusted to her to deliver to him. It wanted now a little more than a week to the day when he was to leave Lamford for good: and although it was next to a moral certainty that he would call to bid adieu to Madame d'Aulaincourt, now improving daily in health and spirits, and by this time fully in possession of all that had passed in respect of the new-found will, besides of other events that had occurred in the neighbourhood, yet this was not the sort of meeting which Christina desired. She must see him alone, if possible, and for some little time. There could be no harm in this: it was for others rather than herself, for his interest, not for her own.

Once or twice she thought of enlisting Dr. Crompton in her favour, with a view to procuring an interview with Herbert; but a minute's consideration assured her that though her reason, that she had an important message to deliver to him, might be believed, her motives would be misunderstood, and she therefore relinquished that plan. It was very disappointing, and she began to wrong herself a good deal about it, which of course did no good; at last she determined, that sooner than give up her hope of

making him happy, she would write to him, desiring to see him alone,—that was, supposing she had no opportunity of making the request when he called to bid farewell to Madame d'Aulaincourt.

One would have thought that this lady herself would have been a good *confidante* in her present difficulty, when one bears in mind the interest and affection she bore to Herbert. But she had been very ill, and Christina was afraid that the mere reference to such an attachment between him and Emmy might bring back painful remembrances of the days when her own daughter was by her side, beside suggesting doubts as to whether, considering that Miss Melton was under her own roof and protection, she ought not to have known of it before. Besides this, there was no doubt that the *éclaircissement* which had taken place between Herbert and Emmy but two days before the party, was indirectly a cause of the accident; and that, had Madame d'Aulaincourt been aware that Herbert was not to be at the "Mouse," she might have refused her sanction to either of her young charges being present. This last was no more than a possibility, as Mrs. Deane and Mrs. Harbottle were present; but such was the strong security of every thing going right that attached to Herbert's presence, that, bearing in mind that it was to be a water-party, Madame d'Aulaincourt might reasonably have made a stipulation before she allowed her children to join it.

Moreover, Christina felt that the secret was Emmy's and Herbert's. The latter did not even know that she was in possession of it. She could not make up

her mind, therefore, to consult even so kind a friend as Madame d'Aulaincourt, and she was driven to turning over all the schemes to which we have already adverted.

Luckily, fortune saved her from being obliged to have recourse to any of them.

It was just a week before Herbert's intended departure, and Christina had been down to her own home for a part of the afternoon, being relieved from any further very close attendance on Madame d'Aulaincourt by the rapid improvement in that lady's health. She still, however, slept at Kemp, and was on the point of returning thither, when, tempted by the beauty of the evening, she thought she would go down the town through the meadows at the back of Castle Bank, and return over the hill by the ruin across the stream to her destination.

It was just the end of September. The intense summer heat had passed away, and yet left enough of its warmth to render the air soft and balmy: all nature still preserved her summer attire, a little worn out in places, perhaps, like a coat which has seen better days, but revigorating showers had brightened that up a little, and it was good for another month at least.

Christina was entering the meadows which belong to Castle Bank, when she discerned Herbert just leaving the house and gardens by a side gate, which would bring him into the path she was traversing. Her heart fluttered uncomfortably now, when that meeting which she had been counting on for weeks seemed suddenly brought to pass: the thought that

he might be quite disinclined to encourage any confidence upon this subject struck her forcibly at this moment, though it had never entered her head before.

He greeted her with most unaffected pleasure, which she on her side, with the remembrance of her share of the past full upon her, could not receive without a blush. She remarked that he was looking pale and thin, and yet more wearied than ill. His eye retained its old clearness, and when he addressed her, something of its old humour; but the general air was that of a man who had been disappointed, and cared little for the ordinary objects which mostly attract a man. This provoked her rather, as she thought how few out of all Lamford knew the real cause of this. To believe that such a man was sorrowing for the thousands he had lost was almost profanity!

But these were mere passing thoughts. His old tones, and the easy fascination of his once prized conversation, left her no time to think.

"How long it is since we have met!" he said.

"How long, indeed!" was the reply.

"You mean something by that remark. Have I been negligent?"

"I do not know," was the answer; "I think you might have called in person at Kemp, instead of sending so many messages. But knowing what I do, I can hold you excused for that."

"Knowing what you do!" he said. "You allude to my deposition at Bickerton."

"No! I do not, though I am almost ready to ac-

knowledge that the anxieties consequent on that constitute a fair excuse," said Christina; "but I meant something more."

"Something more!" he re-echoed, looking at her keenly: "what more?"

"Oh! never mind for the present," she replied; "if you would know, you must give me a little more of your company than a few passing minutes in a meadow."

"I shall be very happy," returned Herbert: "which way are you going?"

"I was going back to Kemp by the hill and the ruin."

"Well! let me accompany you; and as we shall have more to talk of, by your face, than this walk will afford us space for, let us sit down, when we get to the monastery, on the old stone outside."

To this she consented, and as they walked thither, she said,—

"I have been wanting to see you for some time very much; I even thought of writing to you at last."

"Why did you not?"

"That is an odd question," she replied; "I am even now uncertain whether this accidental meeting may not be misconstrued."

"You need be under no such apprehension," said Herbert. "Lamford seems bent on giving me, at least, an immunity from every evil suspicion; the people are so good, so indulgent. You might have written, and nothing would have been thought of it; even had it been known, which it would not have been."

"You dispose of the question very comfortably," she replied, with a smile; "I am by no means so sure that Lamford would have been so indulgent to *me*. But however, we must make the least of your immunity now: as to writing, you remember, I did write to you once."

"True," he said, as a painful expression passed over his countenance, "you did; it was to inform me of—of Miss Melton's departure. Did the note require an answer?"

"You could not have read it through, or you would not ask that."

"How?" said Herbert, and he looked puzzled.

"Did I not tell you therein that I had a message to deliver to you from Miss Melton? It is six weeks and more ago, and you have never shewn the smallest desire to become acquainted with it."

"Of course you did," he said, stopping and reflecting: "and how could I have come to take no notice of it? I must have had some reason;" and a deep red blush overspread his cheek at the thought of his ever having let it pass. "It must have been that I took it to be some mere complimentary message, regretting that she had not seen me to say good-bye; or that, as you were so much engaged with Madame d'Aulaincourt, I did not like to trouble you."

"And so you forgot it?"

"Please do not use that word 'forgot,'" he replied, with some pain; "I should never have forgotten, if I had once thought it of any importance."

"May I add another solution?"

"Pray do."

"That you did not think me sufficiently in Miss Melton's confidence to lead you to believe that I should be intrusted with any secret of importance," said Christina.

"What do you mean?" he said, as his face changed from red to a deadly pale.

"Do not look so alarmed, Mr. Capel," she replied kindly; "the message was of no such moment that any harm has been done by its not being delivered. If there had been a chance of that, you should have had it at whatever cost."

His agitation had been roused, however, and was not so easily allayed. The idea that his happiness had been again wrecked by some *laches* on his part seized him, and for some moments he was hardly master of himself. Common prudence, nevertheless, suggested that Christina might know little or nothing after all, and to give way before her, until he knew the amount of her information, would be weakness the most unpardonable. Still the attempt to control his feelings occupied some moments, and there was a pause, which Christina, out of pity to his too evident distress, left uninterrupted. This and the previous conversation brought them to the stone in front of the monastery, which overlooked the stream and the woods of Bickerton in the distance, having pretty smiling Kemp close at its right hand.

When they had sat down, Herbert, having recovered his composure somewhat, and feeling he was strong enough, renewed the conversation: "You imply, nevertheless, that the message was of some importance."

"I should have thought it of importance to you," she replied, "although it might not be sufficient to lead you to do any act if you received it, or to neglect any act if it were withheld."

"May I know what it is now?" he asked.

"Certainly; I have no intention of our parting without my delivering it," returned Christina: "but if I hesitate in doing so this minute, it is because I hope you will not think the worse of me for being the bearer."

"How can I think so?" he said, warmly.

"I do not know," she replied, "how you might take the fact of my knowing so much of your affairs as my possession of this message will prove I do."

"If Miss Melton put you in possession of them, it is not likely that I should complain," answered Herbert.

"I would fain have something more," said Christina. "I would know that, personally, you had no objection, nay more, were pleased that I knew them; were pleased that my sympathies were excited in your behalf, and that you would not refuse any aid I could offer to help you."

He looked surprised, for she spoke with some emotion.

"Nay! never doubt that, Miss Percy," he said; "there is no one in all Lamford whom I esteem and regard more than yourself; no one than whom I, on my own part, would more willingly make a *confidante* of than you; and no one whose advice I should be more induced to listen to." He pressed her hand as he said this, and she turned her glowing face, and eyes

sparkling with tears, to his in gratitude and hope. The worst was now over. Oh! if only Mignonette would listen to her as he was doing, how might it not end!

"I must tell you first," she said, after a pause, "that I was an accidental depositary of some part of the truth before the rest was confided to me. The day that you and Emmy had that sad explanation, I also came up to Kemp. My custom was then—I have never done so since—to enter the drawing-room by the conservatory; and I did so on that day, just at the closing scene of your interview."

"At its saddest part, then," said Herbert, gloomily.

"Not so; the saddest part was after you were gone," said Christina. "It was as well that I was there, as Emmy did not want Madame d'Aulaincourt or Cecile to know the truth; and in her then state she could not have kept it from them if I had not been there."

"And they did not know, then?" said Herbert.

"They did not know," repeated Christina; "nor did I, for a day or two. Emmy was not strong enough to speak on the subject until that terrible day at the 'Mouse.' On that day we went and rambled in the woods, and she told me all; and our conversation on it was brought to a conclusion by the—" Here Christina stopped, and Herbert took up the sentence, in a voice of anguish,—

"By the catastrophe which, but for me, would never have happened. I it was who caused that—I who have brought a blight upon this smiling place."

"Do not talk so," she said, softly; "it is wrong."

"I have, Miss Percy," he repeated: "compare the Lamford of the day I arrived and the Lamford of the present. From the hour I came, there seems to have been a fate upon it. Frederica dead, Cecile lost, and Nora thrown away upon a ruffian; and at this moment, too, perhaps Emmy dying! All have happened since I came; and the three last are clearly at my door."

"You are surely too good and too religious a man to attribute the inscrutable workings of a wise God to your own instrumentality," said Christina, gravely. "If you talk in this way, I have done. You will make me think that another change has come over Lamford, and that the person I now address is not the Mr. Herbert Capel we all so loved and admired."

"Forgive me," said Herbert, after a moment's pause, and struck by the honest disapprobation which she did not care to disguise,—"forgive me, Miss Percy, if I seem mad, but at times I think I am almost so. Look at the extraordinary career that I have passed here, and at its still more extraordinary close; look at the events which have occurred, more especially as it was drawing to its close,—particularly that elopement, which happened on the very day when I ceased to be the owner of that estate."

"All these things are granted," said Christina; "but your thinking that they proceed from any working of yours is, excuse me, little else than presumption. You have suffered a sad and severe disappointment, Mr. Capel,—I do not allude to Bickerton now,—and it is, perhaps, natural that, with your mind so excited, you should feel the shock of

other events which only indirectly concern you. My feeling has been that of unmixed sympathy for you: your fault, such as it was, though culpable, is not in my eyes beyond pardon, and I have never despaired of being able to make Emmy think so too. Yet, if I were like you, the obstacles I have met with would have made me give the task up long ago.

"What obstacles?" he asked.

"First, that accident at the 'Mouse.' It so completely struck down all Emmy's faculties, that she seemed lost to every sense, save one,—namely, admiration of your part in it. And even this would have worked ready to my hand had she remained: I am sure, had it not been for her mother's illness, all would have been right between you now. That was the second obstacle. Next came your cruel reverse at Bickerton. Out of this evil, too, I foresaw good; it appeared to me that the change in your position, and the certain compassion she would feel at your misfortune, would clear all up between you. But before I could apprize her of this news, there came another obstacle—her mother died."

"Mrs. Melton dead!" cried Herbert.

"Yes! did you not know it? She has been dead rather more than three weeks."

Herbert covered his face with his hands, and Christina heard him mutter in low, bitter tones, "My poor Emmy!"

"All these were obstacles which, if you were always in the same temper you are now, would have deterred you from any good object you had in hand," continued Christina. "Yet *I* do not despair."

Herbert looked up in astonishment. "Why, what can be done now?"

"This: I will travel to Bramsholme, and go down on my knees to her, before I will give it up," said Christina.

"You are indeed a true friend," he replied, looking on her in admiration, "as well as a good counsellor. But though I would not have you think me despondent now after such an example, one thing I feel convinced of, and that is, that Emmy Melton will never be my wife."

"And because of such a whim you would give up further effort," she said.

"Nay, I should be a bad pupil under all your teaching if I did that. I will give up no effort, I will not even surrender hope, as long as you work for me, in spite of my conviction, my presentiment, call it what you will. But tell me what remains for me to do? I have already done more than some people would think right; if you had been present at more of that interview, you might have thought I pressed my poor little girl too far as it was."

This was rather a difficult question to answer. Any further attempt in person on his part might look like persecution. "I do not say at present," she answered, "that you can do anything; but you must be prepared to act at the proper moment. First of all, will you put yourself into my hands?"

"I consider myself in them now."

"Would you be willing to go down to Bramsholme on my bidding to press your suit again?"

"Undoubtedly, if you would give me some idea of

the circumstances under which I went, so as to enable me to shape my new application properly."

"Of course you would have that," said Christina. "And now, first of all, you must explain to me some points in the history of you two which I do not at present understand."

Herbert upon this gave a brief but succinct account of all these transactions as far as he was concerned; which Christina, being thus able to compare with Emmy's, now fairly saw the true state of the case before her. But, as before, she did not judge Mignonette's character right. She did not submit it to the same test as she did Herbert's, and she could not therefore judge of the reasonableness of her conduct. This was the greater pity, because to see the chances of her future success in their true light, she ought rightly to have comprehended all these: whatever disappointment she met with was owing to her not doing so, and to this mistake alone. This conversation brought them round by slow degrees to that point which first commenced it, Emmy's message to Herbert. This was duly delivered, as well as the last one in her letter, and both of them were received with deep feeling; but Herbert, who, on his side, had read his beloved's heart but too well, saw in them but a confirmation of his worst forebodings, though he would not say so to Christina. After some further words, he said,—

"When you write, Miss Percy, I should like you to say some words of sympathy in my behalf for poor Mrs. Melton's death, and that I was not aware of it till to-day; I was dearly fond of her once. It were

better for me not to write myself: Emmy will honour my forbearance in this respect."

"I will say a word, too, on that point," said Christina; "your interests are safe with me. When shall I see you again?"

"I shall call at Kemp early next week to bid adieu to Madame d'Aulaincourt," replied Herbert; "and that reminds me that she ought to know something of this. I am sure Emmy would not object to it now, and it would be a source of interest to her poor bereaved heart."

"I am so glad to hear you say so," returned Christina, gladly; "perhaps she might help us: shall I tell her?"

"Do, by all means."

"And now, Mr. Capel, keep a good heart," said Christina; "follow Emmy's message to the letter, and if prosperity is in store for you, that is the surest way to prepare for it. I must be going. My heart is light this day, and I hail it as a good omen." And she held out her hand, which he pressed warmly. "Adieu," he said, in his turn; "you are one of those good angels that are left on earth to comfort the afflicted and to strengthen the weak. God speed you."

And she was gone, her strong but active figure treading firmly up the slope that intervened between the seat and the gardens of Kemp.

And Herbert, too, thoughtfully bent his steps homewards now.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE WORLD.

* * * * * Only add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith,
Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,
For time to come called charity, the soul
Of all the rest; then wilt thou not be loth
To leave this paradise, but shalt possess
A paradise within thee happier far.—MILTON.

BUT the hour of departure was at hand. The week which had yet to elapse when that meeting with Christina which we have just recorded took place, was gone, and that life of but really ten months,—so short as it appeared now, when regarded from point to point, so long when the many incidents which had occurred within it were run over in detail,—that life was to end. In truth, it was of itself a life, when contrasted with what had been and with what was to be; it contained in itself the hopes, the disappointments, the ties, the affections, the regrets of a lifetime; and who could say, now it was terminating, that all its scenes, and the actors in them, would not as completely pass away to the man who had lived it, as if it had been closed by the usual more decisive and sterner parting.

Herbert had taken his measures for rendering the separation gradual and painless, with judgment and

forethought. Of all things which he dreaded most, was any ebullition of feeling on the part of those whose hearts were running over with sympathy for his reverse. A natural disposition early on the part of some families to *fête* him, as it were, he disposed of at the outset. His *adieux* were mostly made gradually, and one by one, so that the effect produced by each might have time partly to subside before that of the other was incurred. A family dinner this week at the Harbottles', a cup of tea at little Miss Bampton's, and a couple of quiet evenings with Colonel and Mrs. Deane, to whom (the now crest-fallen Arthur had rejoined his regiment) his company was as a healing medicine, and with whom he forced himself to throw off the heavy depression of spirits that was upon him, constituted the manner in which he prepared for departure. As the time approached, indeed, he began to feel how dear the place had become to him, and something very like grief pressed upon him at leaving the scene of so many joys and so many memories. The loss of Bickerton was as nought; the severing himself from Lamford tore his very heart-strings. People may say, and did say, that there was no necessity for him to go. We won't pretend to argue the point. He had his way to make in the world. In spite of the little competence left him by the second will, a man who had filled the position of an extensive landlord could hardly be expected to sit down in idleness. We rather think, therefore, that there are few of us who would not have done the same. Ah! these partings! those only who have few friends in the world, and have had their worth tested by the wind

of adversity, which, blowing all the false ones away, serves to draw closer the good and true, can tell what they are. Herbert knew the value of his friends now. He had tested that before, and his present position tested it full well now. No one fell away from him in Lamford. Ah! these partings! 'Twere better almost never to love, than have one's heart torn by the severance of the ties!

During this week, too, there had been a sale at Bickerton of those effects which Herbert could call most positively his own. It had been a very successful one: people bid well, as much from a desire to possess the evidences of his undoubted taste and discrimination, as from a desire to possess the articles themselves. It cost him a pang or two, but he judiciously kept out of the way; and as his mind was, during some part of the day, occupied with another scene, it fell lighter upon him, probably, than it might otherwise have been expected to do.

That scene, to which we must devote a few lines, was the bidding farewell to Madame d'Aulaincourt.

It was in the afternoon of the day that Herbert went to Kemp. The lady received him alone, with her usual sweetness, softened down, perhaps, in vivacity from what it had been. She looked thin and pale, and her hair, which had formerly shewn the marks of a thin silver line only here and there, had been becoming, since her affliction, more decidedly gray. Christina, thinking herself best away, had gone out as the hour drew near, for Herbert had expressed his intention of calling, and his purpose in doing so.

"It is hard, Mr. Capel," said Madame d'Aulain-

court, "not to have been able to see you for so long, and now to see you on a farewell visit."

"It has indeed been hard," said he, "for I in my troubles have missed your old kind interest, the want of which one never knows until they come."

This was judicious; it drew her attention from the calamity which had fallen upon herself, and in which he had borne so conspicuous a part.

"You have indeed been severely afflicted," she replied; "and that, too, at the outset of life, when hope is young, and the heart depends so much upon the prospects of a future."

"And yet," returned Herbert, "that should bring its consolation, if we could but seize and appreciate it. If hope is young, so should be the power of bearing. The buoyancy of those days is a due counterpoise to the severity of the blow."

"You speak bravely, and like yourself," said the lady, "though your heart beats too warm and high for you to feel all you strive to feel. I know you, Mr. Capel, as well as you know yourself; will you permit me to say that, little as I have been able to see of you lately, your leaving us now I feel as another bitter loss to me?"

Herbert could not trust himself to reply.

"You are so bound up with the past," she continued, "that I often think of you as a part of it,—even as one, sometimes, in whom I have some property."

"Oh! think so always, Madame d'Aulaincourt, pray," he returned, with emotion; "to my heart, now desolate and forlorn as it feels, the knowledge that it

has one other even to cling to, be it ever so far away, is as 'peace.'"

"And there are many hearts as well that beat for you, Herbert," she said. "If that brings you comfort, you have stores of it. Courage, 'your sorrow may be changed to joy,' even yet."

He shook his head, but could not reply. It was a scene that well might wring his heart. The widowed, childless lady, sitting alone in that room, which but a few months before had been graced by the sweet sad Frederica and the joyful sparkling Cecile. The day of his first visit all came back before his eyes, when he had become first enchanted by those three specimens of female excellence. And then came another association like a black cloud across the sunshine of the past,—the last day when he was in that room, the conservatory, the high-backed chair, and Mignonette's stricken heart! Sunshine and storm, noonday and night, all is but life again enacted in one ever-recurring, changeless cycle.

"There are times," continued Madame d'Aulaincourt, "when I see you as I would fain have seen you in reality, in that combat which you fought with death. I know it, I see it all, Herbert. Christina has told me, and her generous heart missed no point in that brave but terrible tale."

"Do not speak of that," answered Herbert; "there is no one that would not have done as I, had they had the power."

"On the contrary," interrupted the lady, "I cannot reason thus, I have no call to reason thus: I can see the fact as only it was; and as would my child

only have seen it, had she lived to open her eyes once more. I know, I am sure, that could she have felt again, it would have been for an expression of joy that you were the rescuer."

"Pray cease, Madame d'Aulaincourt," cried Herbert; "you pain me, you do, indeed, by thus referring to that day. It recalls to me only my own remorse at having been, by my absence, the cause of all the evil. Speak of your child if you will, and of all the bright days which she made brighter by her presence, but spare me the mention of that one."

There was again a silence, for this was a subject on which neither could speak much without being tempted to yield to some ebullition of feeling; and all of us know too well what choking, suffocating pain such emotions, if restrained, produce. After some minutes the light song of some foreign birds in the conservatory attracted Herbert's attention.

"Ah! there are my friends again," he said, anxious to break the silence: "how are they?"

"One, I think, is moulting, or ill," replied Madame d'Aulaincourt; "they have been carefully tended, too, though the care is not the same as that to which they have been used. My object is to leave everything precisely as it was; to know no change, save in the presence of my lost ones. Thus their rooms are the same as heretofore. When you come down to see us, we will visit them together. One day last week brought round Frederica's birthday: on the one before I surprised her while she was sleeping, by surrounding her bedside with vases of flowers, and some little present which I thought she would prize. So

did I on this occasion, and there they stand still, somewhat faded; and though the bed is tenantless, yet when I enter, as also in that of my other poor child, her presence is with me, though I neither see nor hear it. Do not think me foolish, but the one remaining hope of my life is, that this should be always so. By retaining the external tokens of their existence, I hope to preserve their internal presence, invisible, but always here, whether in this room or in their chambers, or over the green knoll beneath which their frames lie sleeping. So will they be with me until the day when I shall be so blessed as to be allowed to join them."

It was impossible not to be transported with the suffering sweetness of this sorely-tried lady. Herbert, much as it pained him to be witness of these recollections, could not withhold his tribute of admiration at her gentle, resigned affliction.

"Oh! Madame d'Aulaincourt," he said, "that you could teach me to be like you. Oh! that I could learn from you, now that the dear reality is gone, to content myself in humility and resignation with the memory of it. But we men have not that in us. We fling blessings from us at random, and then chafe, and wear, and fret that they are gone; while you, who prize and value them, and turn them to good account like the faithful servant with his talent, can bow without a murmur to the stroke that tears them from you."

"And so will you in due time," she answered. "To all is not given the same gift: you have other powers,

which I and others in our turn may well envy. Look around you at the regrets which at your departure you leave behind, and you will have no reason to think yourself wanting."

It was much in this strain that the conversation continued till it was time for him to take leave; and, with a heartfelt honour and affection for the widowed lady, he bid her adieu. As he departed, he could not resist one last look at the smiling gardens, and the old ruin glowing gloriously in the rays of a setting sun; and as the many recollections of the scenes passed on that lawn, and beneath that ruin, and beside the bubbling Lamm, he turned, with something like one sob, and took his road to Bickerton, now no longer home.

By this time all the necessary preliminaries for his departure had been made. His library, the only *souvenir* he had made up his mind to save from the wreck of his once glorious fortunes, had been duly packed in cases to be consigned to the care of some guardian of furniture, never to see the light, until either ambition or success again roused his nature to the pride of their possession. He was to proceed to town at first, until he was able to look about him, as the saying is. He had to make the plunge from the pinnacle of his old fortune into the dark uncertain waters of his new one, and he preferred to do it alone. Dacre would not accompany him. Dacre was to stay, at Mr. Edmund Wordsworth's request, to minister to the wants of the suffering and benighted at Lamm's Ferry, until the new

vicar was appointed. Everything there was to be carried out precisely as Herbert had commenced it, if the new parson did not throw obstacles in the way; and Dacre saw that it was too good a work to be left to itself. Mr. Edmund Wordsworth's opinions on religious matters were not precisely the same as Mr. Capel's, but in such a work as that requiring to be done at Lamm's Ferry, they could not be brought into collision, and those of Dacre were of such a kind as quite to obviate any unpleasantness on that score.

Herbert's heart was very heavy as the day drew near, and yet it cannot be said that he regretted that he was going. The hard part of bidding it farewell was over. He never could have lived there happily after the past. And he had every certainty of a hearty welcome on any chance visit he chose to pay in the future; but still his heart was heavy. Though his lot was far better, in a worldly sense, than it was a month before he was declared owner of that great estate, and though in every other respect he was precisely as he was on the day he first put foot on it, it is, perhaps, not too much to say that he never felt more thoroughly wretched than on these last few days. It was, probably, that the continued strain on the nervous system, which it had undergone for weeks, was beginning to be relaxed when there was nothing more to be done, and nothing more to be looked forward to; and then came the sinking—the sinking of heart which some of us know but too well.

On the afternoon of the day he was to start, he

had one last interview with Christina. He had seen her once or twice since the day when she confided to him what she knew, and they had talked much on his future, and on the hopes on which she was so sanguine. These conversations had not changed his expectations of the result in the smallest degree, but it would have been sheer ingratitude to so persevering and sympathizing an auxiliary to have damped her efforts, and he therefore entered into the detail of them with corresponding warmth and encouragement. On this day a final debate took place on the same subject. Herbert had been to the office to say good-bye to Mr. Percy, and he thence repaired to the house to give one final pressure of the hand to his daughter. This process, as might have been expected, occupied some half-hour or more: again was the old subject revived, and further measures discussed and determined on. Christina and Madame d'Aulaincourt had agreed between them that it would not be wise to exercise any direct pressure on Mignonette too soon after her mother's death; and though her mind could be worked upon indirectly by letters, that would be the furthest extent to which it would be prudent at present to push the matter. After another month or five weeks, Christina would, if necessary, go down and see her, to judge, if possible, the meaning of her somewhat exalted letters, a specimen of which we have already seen, and with a view of turning to Herbert's account the state of mind which they seemed to point out as existing in her. And so they parted; Herbert addressing her as his best and truest friend, and she feeling, when he left, very much as if one of

the strongest ties she had on earth now had been rudely severed.

In truth, although the sanguine expectations which she entertained of consummating his happiness with Emmy struck no corresponding chord in his breast, yet the confidence which he had accorded her had done much to lighten the severe load of the past week. To know that there is some one who feels with us in our distresses is no common consolation; but to feel also that that some one is working heart and soul in our behalf, is making common cause with us against our distresses, is equivalent to taking half the burden from our shoulders, relieving and refreshing the traveller at the same moment. Herbert, despondent of his own fortunes as he was, had still something to look forward to, though it were only Christina's letters; though he had no hopes of his own, yet he had the result of hers to watch, and there was comfort even in that.

One of the last visits he made this afternoon was to the graves of the "Lily and the Rose." The sight of them brought back the old recollections of a few months ago, when those mounds were but flat level grass. In gazing on them, his eye seemed to pierce the cerements, and to behold the sister-cousins in their grave-robes of white in peaceful sleep side by side. Frederica with her ever sweet smile, Cecile with her face as he only saw it once, without the merry laugh; though even here he remembered that her features were quiet and composed, as if, as was the case, she had fallen asleep. The autumn leaves had covered their beds with their brown shower; yet

a little, and the white robe of a chill winter shall be a type of that which has fallen on some hearts they have left behind. Herbert placed upon the graves a few flowers of the rarer sort of amaranth, which he had plucked from the well-kept beds of Bickerton, the last fruits of his possession; and thus completed this adieu.

He was to leave Lamford at night: he could not have done so by day. As on the first day of his coming he had dined with Dr. Crompton, so on the night of his departure he was to eat that meal at the same welcome table.

Dacre and Motcombe were of the party. The latter was to accompany him in the carriage to the station: the former was not sorry he was not selected. Loving Herbert as he did, he could not understand him in those exalted moments when all the deep romance of his nature was roused, and his nervous system strung at its highest pitch. He could comprehend his sorrow at the loss of Mignonette for the time, but then the pride which he had regretted, as so mischievous in the first instance, he rather hoped would have stood his friend now, and would have driven the relentless little girl out of his heart. He could understand, too, his grief at leaving Lamford, if it had been for good; but as it was, he would be better received therein for the future than ever he would have been had he remained at Bickerton, and he could return when he pleased. The loss which would have affected so many in the highest degree, namely, the loss of that fine estate, affected him not at all; and therefore Dacre had little patience or sympathy with

a distress now, which, to his mind, savoured marvellously of weakness.

The dinner was none of the liveliest. The Doctor, who had never been quite the same man since the death of his favourite Cecile, did the honours, after a fashion which he meant to be a jocular, but which was, in reality, rather hysterical. Dacre himself was somewhat unfortunate in the topics of conversation he selected; and Motcombe, who, though the most self-possessed of the party, could not be moved out of his usual reserved and quiet habit, did not lend much assistance to help them from these difficulties. At last it was all over. Herbert had bid adieu to Miss Crompton, who as a parting gift had presented him with a letter of introduction to Mrs. Martin, strongly advising him to cultivate her acquaintance, as she would introduce him to first-rate society, "being, indeed, herself very well connected; being, as you may not know, Mr. Capel, *own* cousin to the late Lord Melbourne."

They were off; and any expression of feeling which his countenance might have betrayed was concealed by the obscurity of the carriage. Indeed, Herbert had reason to congratulate himself in this respect: the night was intensely dark, and there was no moon —a valid reason in most country towns for *not* lighting the gas-lamps,—so that the sight of objects likely to excite feelings of pain was spared him. Neither of the two spoke much during the transit to the station. What Motcombe said was uttered with a view to encourage and tranquillize his companion, and no more.

They had not to wait long for the train. It soon passed up, being the last that night. One "God bless you," and "Mind you write," and he was gone; whirled away from joys, which in this world flee fast enough of themselves, to other and distant scenes, wherein he was to begin life anew.

CHAPTER XIV.

WALL-FLOWER.

Whom we love first we can but seldom wed:
Time rules us all; and life indeed is not
The thing we planned it out, ere hope was dead.
And then we women cannot choose our lot:
Much must be borne, which it is hard to bear;
Much given away, which it were sweet to keep.
God help us all, who so much need His care;
And yet we know the Shepherd loves His sheep.

OWEN MEREDITH.

It is not our purpose to stay and examine with any minuteness the effect produced by Herbert's actual departure, and it would not be a very easy thing to determine with accuracy if we did. There had been so many changes of late in Lamford, that it would be hard to separate one from the other, so as to admit of a just estimate of their individual results. On Christina, for instance, all these changes had told with more or less force. Having a heart for all, she sustained a loss in the losses of all; and the smallest reverses of society in Lamford affected her in some way or another.

Her position now may be very clearly summed up in reference to what had passed lately. In Clarinda Trentham she had, by the Vicar's death, sustained a loss at the bed-side of the sick, and in the cottages of the lowly and poor. Both the Miss Trenthams were her fellow-workers, and these three young ladies

were at the head of all those parochial schemes which require the superintendence of the gentler sex for their advancement and prosperity. In Nora she had lost another companion, and one who, from some similarity of temperament, was almost necessary at times to the indulging of certain innocent tastes and accomplishments. In Cecile and Frederica she had, as it were, lost almost two dear sisters,—for Kemp was about as much her home as her own father's house. It is true that she had felt none of these losses so acutely as she might have done, on account of her long and close attendance on Madame d'Aulaincourt: she had not had time to entertain much more than one feeling exclusively, and that part of her attention which was not occupied by the bereaved lady, she almost entirely devoted to her schemes for the furtherance of Emmy and Herbert's happiness. But now she had been relieved from the former of these occupations, and the two latter had left Lamford also. There can be no doubt, indeed, but that Herbert's departure was a severe blow to her. It appears to us, though we would sooner that our readers were guided by their own superior judgment on this matter, that Christina loved Herbert very dearly. True, it was an utterly unselfish, pure, single-minded love, having for its aim his welfare and happiness alone, without the thought, and much less the hope, of ever sharing it herself. But we know it did exist when there was this hope, and now that it had disappeared, the zeal, the devotion, the self-sacrifice that sparkled in all her efforts, point most strongly to the belief that her affection for him

in intensity, though not in purpose, was the same. The strongest argument against this opinion consists, perhaps, in the difficulty of finding another example of it, and philosophers may contend that it is contrary to human nature that such an affection, under attendant circumstances, could exist; but we are dealing with a single case, arguing from the facts which compose it alone, and can therefore alone present to our readers, as we would any other single instance of virtue, a heroism, the analysis of which cannot be conducted after any known human rules.

Christina, however, if not loving Herbert, loved his cause most devotedly, and his departure carried with it the pleasure of conversing with him upon it, of deliberating on new plans, and, what was more in accordance with the impulses of her own heart, of encouraging and strengthening him when he was downcast and depressed.

And now, when he had gone and she looked around, and saw the vacant places of Clarinda and Sylvia, of Nora and Frederica, and of Cecile and Emmy, her heart would feel desolate too, and doubts of her success in that object which was nearest it would creep in here also; and she began to discover that there might be yet one blow awaiting her, more to be dreaded than any which had yet fallen. Madame d'Aulaincourt, being in possession of all her hopes and views, and of the whole of Herbert's ill-fated love-story, brought her some relief in talking over it; but the elder lady's manner kept not half pace enough with her own sanguine temper, and was often couched in terms of warning against her being

too hopeful, and even in terms of blame of Herbert for his early carelessness to his own happiness.

Emmy's letters, too, both puzzled and alarmed Christina. She expressed her opinion more than once that the little girl must be ill; and even Madame d'Aulaincourt shook her head at them at times, saying, that they afforded the worst sign in the whole business; but she did not explain her meaning, and Christina had not the courage to ask it of her. And yet there was no such ground, she thought, for great alarm. Emmy had suffered three severe afflictions, one upon the other, and the last in the dearest tie which a girl can have; and it was no wonder if her grief drew her from the things of this world to the thoughts of heaven, and that, out of severe visitation, she was plucking the lessons of eternal happiness. But, though Christina would try and reason away her forebodings thus, it was not always that she could shut her heart to the convictions of something worse, and to the suspicion that the gentle nature had, in a worldly sense, been overstrained; that the chords of the heart had been made to bear too severe a pressure, and could not recover themselves now that an attempt at removing it was to be made. She tried to think that the consolation of that love, which had once brought her so much happiness, would renew the bruised and drooping flower. But her own desolation, perhaps,—perchance, too, the enervating effects of long attendance on a sick bed-side acting on her physical nature,—depressed her own buoyant disposition, for she certainly began, like Herbert himself, to fear that the result of all her endeavours

might be a fruitless journey down to the groves of shady Somerset after all. Still she tried to keep up a brave heart, and all her letters to Mignonette were full of this,—breathing encouragement and hopes of a happy future to them all, talking of the days when the latter would visit Lamford again, and would speak of all their past troubles as bygones, merely to be wondered at and commemorated with a resigned smile.

One distraction from the somewhat capricious and harassing tendency of her thoughts at this period Christina had. Herbert, before his departure, had urged the propriety of her shewing as much attention as she had it in her power to shew to Mrs. Deane. Relieved, as we have already seen, from her protracted duties at Kemp, she was enabled to follow this advice. In truth it was wanted, for the Colonel and his wife had by this time begun to feel loneliness in its most aggravated form. Neither Nora nor her husband had as yet been received at Natchetts. A few letters, through a solicitor, had passed on either side, which had shewn that the Colonel was not disposed to act harshly, though for the present he declined to see either of them. Mrs. Deane had, as it happened, not recovered from the event itself, or from the explosion on the part of her husband which it had called forth. She remained so nervous and low, that any excitement of the smallest nature, it was said, might produce untoward results; so that Edward Wordsworth and Nora Deane had been married some seven weeks, and still the portals of the paternal mansion swung not on their hinges to receive them.

When Christina first went up to Natchetts after the day of Nora's flight, it wanted but a few days to that of Herbert's intended departure. This afforded an excellent topic of conversation to people who were mutually afraid of treading on other more dangerous ground. Christina was pained to see the effect that the foolish and headlong step on the part of their daughter had produced on the old people. In Mrs. Deane, physically speaking, it had made no change; her hair was not grayer, nor her face more aged: but in place of her former accustomed unruffled manner, carried as it had always been to the verge of affectation, was a nervous irritability with everything and everybody, extending even to the visitor who came to minister comfort by her presence, which was most striking, as well as uncomfortable. The alteration in the Colonel, on the other hand, was much more painful, though it might not have been so serious in a pathological point of view. He did not seem ill, or indeed bowed down so much by affliction, as that he seemed aged. He appeared, during these six weeks, to have crumpled up, as it were, from haleness and heartiness into the commencement of a premature decrepitude. He talked in his old quick fashion, and with his old laugh, but both the talk and the laugh were such as one might have expected to meet after a separation of some ten years. He tried boldly to impress people with the belief that he had borne up against his affliction and mastered it, and in his manner he succeeded; but the physical change belied both talk, and laugh, and manner; and of this, neither courage, nor pretence, nor dissimulation could get the better.

Christina used to go up to them often after this first visit, and her presence was always welcome, even though the old lady, in her suspicious nervousness, sometimes chose an odd way of shewing it. The old man, however, did not disguise his satisfaction, and on some occasions would ask her to walk out with him, when they would ramble through his own park and sometimes into that of Bickerton; and he would laugh, and talk, and joke with her, speaking on all sorts of subjects, save one, which he seldom touched on. One fine afternoon he induced her to go down with him as far as the "Mouse," and they both inspected the scene of that never-to-be-forgotten catastrophe. Save in the look of the woods, it seemed hardly changed, and it was with a choking sensation that Christina looked up to the spot where Mignonette had imparted her simple confidence, and then down to the deep stream, where another friendship had in the same moment become engulfed. The old man, too, looked at it in a gruff way, saying, "It was a cruel blow to lose a child so; but, mark you, there are crueller!"

Edmund Wordsworth was down by this time, but had as yet been very little seen. He drove about Bickerton in a pony chaise, accompanied by a sort of man-servant of the better class, who answered his questions, and told him, as well as he could, the nature of the scenery they were passing. Very few of the gentry had called upon him at present, not so much from any distaste to making his acquaintance, as from their being, most of them, more or less unsettled by the changes and other events which it has been our

lot to record in these pages. The Colonel could not make up his mind to call: he thought well of the new comer, and that he was in every respect a different person to him who bore the same name; the remembrance, however, that he was brother to the man who had done him the foulest wrong, always checked him whenever he thought of it.

Christina, too, found some relief in the company of Mrs. Harbottle and her daughters. In that house the conduct of Nora Deane was canvassed most frequently and freely. Old Harbottle, though a good-hearted man, and a kind neighbour, always gave his opinion somewhat more readily and dogmatically than was consistent with good breeding. "Served the man right," he said, looking very wise; "brings up a wolf in his fold, and then wonders that he steals a lamb. I could pardon all his folly in that respect as long as they were boy and girl, but to bring the man into his house who had turned out ill, whom he knew by that time to be a libertine, and I don't know what else, — you may say what you like, Miss Percy," (Christina had not spoken before on the subject,) "but it was nothing else than downright, stupid, wrong-headed wilfulness—that's all."

"But, my dear," Mrs. Harbottle would say in a deprecatory manner, "young Wordsworth was the friend of his son."

"The greater reason to keep him away," returned her better-half: "the son was a fool, and his friend could only turn out to be a bigger fool, or, what he really was, a great knave."

Mrs. Harbottle's own manner of speaking of it was

widely different. She said little, indeed, on the affliction of the parents, thinking, possibly, that her husband's remarks, though conveyed not in the most delicate and considerate style, had a little truth in them, and that the Deanes had to thank their own indiscretion for a good deal of it. But she talked to Christina upon the probable results to Nora herself of so imprudent and hasty a step. She spoke in despair of the chance of Edward's becoming a decent member of society, and of Nora's being precisely the nature to wean him to become so. She hoped it was true that he had been deceived about the succession to Bickerton, but she could not help fearing that it was not so, as, judging from the young man's character, there was reason to believe that he would have been in no hurry to marry at all had he been the lucky inheritor under the second will. To all which Christina did not vouchsafe an opinion, and hardly spoke, except to express a hope that Nora, at all events, believed her husband to have been deceived, because without that she could neither respect nor trust, if indeed she could love him, more; and to this Mrs. Harbottle and her daughters subscribed very heartily indeed.

Well, thus the days passed by and became weeks, and the tone of Mignonette's letters did not mend. Madame d'Aulaincourt did not see so much harm in them now, but she was herself not fully recovered from the prostration of a great sorrow, and Christina did not attach importance to her opinion on this point. She herself thought Emmy was either fretting herself, or was on the verge of some illness. Her progress in Herbert's behalf had been literally nothing; and in

her letters to him, much as she tried to soften this fact, she could not wholly disguise it. But he had expected no better, and did not complain. Instead, indeed, of regretting with her her want of success, he consoled her upon it with the assurance that he had prepared himself for the worst, and that he only trusted it would be no greater blow to her than it was now to him. Christina was not made of such stuff as this. She set about her task to win, she was heart and soul in it, and it would grieve her bitterly not to win. She did not say this, however, fearing to vex him on her own score, for she knew how quick he was in his present state to seize upon any form of worry, and so to nurse it till it tore him, as it were, to pieces. Nevertheless, the prospect was a bad one, and she began boldly to set her face towards the execution of her purpose of going down to Bramsholme; for if Emmy was allowed to indulge in the morbid feelings which had for the present most unquestionably got hold of her, Herbert's hopes would rather become frustrated than forwarded by the delay.

It was the commencement of November, and she was still hesitating, when Madame d'Aulaincourt urged her first to carry out a recommendation which she had several times made her, to consult Dr. Crompton on the matter. Madame d'Aulaincourt, in fact, had immense faith in the Doctor, not only as to his professional skill, but as to his pre-eminent wisdom on all other subjects. Now Christina by no means coincided with that lady in the latter part of her opinion, but she really was in want of some person who

would speak to her father in her behalf in reference to the journey she was about to make, and she could hardly expect this of any one without giving him some share of her confidence. Moreover, as a medical man, Dr. Crompton had an undoubted reputation for skill and experience, and she thought that his opinion on Emmy's letters would be of considerable importance to her in the scheme she meditated. Madame d'Aulaincourt added to all this, that Dr. Crompton had been a warm personal friend and well-wisher of Mr. Capel's, and that even if his advice were not followed, it would have the advantage of being genuine and conscientious. These several arguments decided Christina. She had a *carte blanche* from Herbert to tell the circumstances to any one whose assistance she thought desirable in her undertaking, and so there was no difficulty on that score. She sought, then, the old Doctor. He listened to her communication with some surprise, — having first reminded her that she was one of *his* children, and had therefore a claim on his sympathies and assistance,—and when she had concluded the history of Emmy and Herbert's love affair, and a short summary of her own hopes, he shook his head, saying,—

"My dear child, it is of no use for us mortals to try and hasten matters which do not depend upon us. I have been for months past at much the same game in another direction as yourself, but without my being aware of other obstacles, which I see now would have been fatal to my efforts, there was a decree all ready to step in and finish at one swoop every prettily arranged plan that I had perfected. Now listen.

You know that I from the first admired Capel; I knew more of his inner emotions than some of you, and there is nothing that I would not have done for that young man. It is just four months ago that I, for one, began to suspect the existence of this second will. A man who had been a servant to Admiral Ayscough came up from Scotland to the Insurance Office of which I am a director. He was going to emigrate to Canada, and he wished to part with a policy of insurance which he had effected on his life. He heard me mention the Admiral's will just as he was on the point of leaving. He had no time to spare, as he was to join the emigrant ship at Liverpool immediately; but he did mention his surprise that, as a witness to the Admiral's will, he had not been called upon to testify to its genuineness when proved. At the moment I thought nothing of the remark, supposing, of course, that the lawyers knew how to manage their own business best; but after he was gone, it struck me that I had heard the names of the two witnesses to the will that had been proved, and his was not one. Being struck by this circumstance, I wrote at once to him to tell me the address of the other witness to the will, which I had lost, as I had business to transact for him. Mark! I never mentioned the name of the witness whose address I wanted, because in the first place I did not know it, and in the second I was pretty sure that he would mention it in his answer. I was not mistaken. The man wrote to me from the ship, as it was on the point of sailing, and sent me the name of Mr. Scratton, and his London address. Now I put three things together upon this;

first, the fact that there was a will attested by himself and Mr. Scratton, of which, at present, no one had heard; secondly, what I also knew, that the man himself was in the Admiral's service subsequent to the date of the will which had been proved; thirdly, and this I had gathered from Capel himself, that there was a mysterious parcel addressed to Mr. Scratton, which had been found among the Admiral's papers, and to deliver which to that gentleman, being in Australia, the executors had been put to some perplexity. Perhaps it may be said that I was wrong in not disclosing all I knew then. But it must be remembered that by this time Mr. Scratton had, or might have received the parcel, and in one post the matter would be cleared up. No good could possibly be gained by my kicking up a dust, and I held my peace. But I not the less thought of the matter, for all that. I pictured to myself Capel dispossessed, and in imagination I at once lodged him at Kemp until the first weight of his misfortune had passed over. I saw him forlorn and unhappy, pitied by such a girl as Cecile;—don't open your eyes so wide; I dare say you think me very silly; but I thought that, with such feelings, in such company, and with such an opportunity, if he did not console himself by falling in love with that dear girl, he was not the man I took him for. Now stop a moment: I have not done. The pith of the plan has to come. You know that when I and my old sister die, there will be nobody to inherit my property. My idea was to treat Cecile as my own child, to settle a certain sum on her, or to leave it all to her, if her mother would not hear of the other way, and so preserve

Capel to Lamford and to Kemp. What more need I say? Providence in one day blew my little fabric to atoms, and I suppose now all I shall have to do will be to leave everything to this little threadpaper of a girl in the West of England instead, in order to induce her to marry the man she is in love with."

Christina could hardly keep her countenance at this romantic piece of castle-building on the part of the old gentleman, though she tried hard, for he seemed quite affected at its untoward conclusion. She, however, hastened to express her conviction that the plan he proposed would hardly be likely to sway such a girl as Mignonette. But there were other points to consult him on, to which she turned without loss of time; and the first was about the state of Emmy's mind to be gathered from her letters. The Doctor read these over with much care, and listened to Christina's relation of her own and Madame d'Aulaincourt's forebodings. But he could give no satisfactory answer. His opinion, he thought, would be too uncertain, unless he saw her, for him to recommend her to be guided by it. Her mind was not certainly in its normal condition, but to what extent this might reach, or from what cause, he could not undertake to say. He strongly advised her, however, not to postpone her journey, if it bore reference only to Herbert's hopes, as such a state of things might increase rather than decrease in intensity in such a place as Bramsholme. Then complimenting her on her bravery and determination, he said, jocularly, "If you fail, Christina, I really think I shall go down there myself, and try my powers."

The next point was that he should obtain her father's consent to her going. "You see, Dr. Crompton," she said, "that I have been so much away from my mother lately, that I am afraid of his thinking me undutiful or unfeeling. But I have set my mind on this, indeed I have."

"Unfeeling no one can call you," said the Doctor; "you are one of my children all over. How long do you propose to stay away?"

"I shall only be at Bramsholme a week," was the answer; "if I fail to gain my point by that time, I shall not have the heart to remain longer."

"I will manage it for you, my dear," said the Doctor: "and if you do fail, the best thing that Capel can do will be to mar—, well, never mind."

The same evening the Doctor explained to Mr. Percy that his daughter, Christina, was much out of health from the severe attendance she had paid at the bedside of Madame d'Aulaincourt, and as Miss Melton had asked her to spend a week with her at Bramsholme, he, speaking professionally, advised that she should go. Mr. Percy thought Christina looking very well, as indeed did, secretly, the Doctor; but as he advised it, so it must be: and after some little grumbling about the maid she would want to take, his consent was awarded.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VILLAGE WHERE THE BLUE-BELLS GROW.

Then how serene! when in the favourite room
Gales from the jasmines soothe the evening gloom;
When weary peasants at the close of day
Walk to their cots, and part upon the way;
When cattle slowly cross the shallow brook,
And shepherds pen their folds and rest upon their crook.—CRABBE.

It was a beautiful autumnal evening, that on which Christina and her maid were set down at the station at Bart. The summer this year had lingered till late before taking its departure, and had left its shadow behind in a prolonged autumn. Though the second week in November, the country wore the smile of a month earlier, and, save in a slight chilliness in the air, hardly felt in the warmth of a genial sun, yet an hour short of his appointed course, no one could perceive in the signs of the season the near approach of that of dreariness and decay. The trees might look bare, it is true, and the mellowed colour of the woods, which betokens the true autumnal time, might be wanting; but these were points which only strike the searcher for the difference, and not him who accepts Nature's loveliness as it is. Christina had given no intimation to Emmy of her intended visit, and therefore no one was at the station to greet her. She had

rather wished to take her by surprise, to see the effect of her presence when placed before her on a sudden; perhaps, too, with an idea that it would enable her better to judge of the probable result of her journey than it would have done if she had prepared Emmy by letter for her coming.

The distance from Bart to Bramsholme was about two miles. Fatigued and cramped by her long confinement in the train, Christina thought she should like to walk it, and, in order to attract less attention, alone. She ordered her maid, therefore, to remain behind with what luggage there was until she sent for her, much to the latter's gratification, who, being an old servant and rather hard to move, had no fancy for a pedestrian excursion at that time of day in a strange neighbourhood. So she remained behind to be pumped by the station-master, and to baffle that individual by monosyllabic replies, while Christina set out very contentedly to walk.

The beauty of the evening and the exercise soon restored all the elasticity of her spirits, which the length of the journey, and her own forebodings respecting the object she had in view, had somewhat disturbed. The difference in the character of the country to what she had been accustomed, the carelessly tended hedgerows, the flatness and yet fertility of that broad plain around, the dissimilarity, too, of sound which pervaded everything, amused as well as struck her fancy. She did not make comparisons—it was hardly possible; what was new attracted her and pleased her senses,—that was all. A dreamy tranquillity seemed to cover everything, from the tinkling bell in the sheep-fold to the

labourer wending his way homeward from his day's work. She met but few people, and little seemed to disturb the stillness, save the soft low chime of Bramsholme Church, as it twice struck the quarters during her progress towards it.

After a walk of little more than a mile, her course took her into the main road which runs from Taunton through Bramsholme, and what was most striking in the locality here met her view. Bramsholme, in keeping with the surrounding country, is situated on a flat, with just a little rising ground to the left, on which stands the church and the parsonage-house. Approaching it, to the distance of about three-quarters of a mile, is an avenue of poplars, of which those on one side were now shedding their long shadows somewhat fantastically across the road, giving a rather foreign appearance to the *chaussèe*. But this is confined to the avenue itself, everything else around breathing only that charm which we English know attaches to our landscapes. Here Christina passed a few children with their nursemaid, who turned out afterwards to be little Meltons; but she did not scrutinize them very keenly, perhaps in consequence of their adopting a contrary line of behaviour to herself, and taking her in, as the phrase is, with all their eyes, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet. At a slight bend in the road she caught a view of the little country church with its grey square tower, which seemed now to crown the view at the end of the vista formed by the trees, though she found afterwards that it really lay somewhat to the left of them. This sight reminded her how near she was to her

journey's end, as well as of the mission on which she had come; and with a feeling of hesitation she stopped and looked behind down the road which she had just traversed.

Well, indeed, might those children in their sable garments regard her. She was a sight even in those parts. Her strong, self-reliant, though somewhat short figure, would have raised a spirit of enquiry in any one: and her bright eye, together with the coal blackness of her hair, and the clear brown tint of her complexion, would have irresistibly bid the enquirer to look again. There was something poetical in her appearance, as she stood then. The pensive look of doubting reflection in her countenance, the erect steadiness of her bearing, the presence, almost in her whole person, of the good, generous purpose which had brought her thither, endowed her figure with an interest by which no one could have failed to have been attracted. But there was hardly any one to regard her. The general humming quiescence which pervaded all nature seemed to have extended to every inhabitant of Bramsholme itself—if it had any. Save here and there some rustic with his dog, or a village girl carrying water, and the children already adverted to, no one crossed her path, and slowly and with beating heart she wound her way almost unnoticed into the village.

Here an ostler rubbing down a horse answered her question, as to which was the parsonage-house, in a somewhat heavy-sounding dialect, having first subjected her to a tolerable stare—which seemed to satisfy him, however; for having delivered himself of

his information, he forthwith returned to the labour in which he was engaged, and to its accompanying sibillation.

The parsonage was a comfortable-looking building from the outside, consisting of a number of rooms by no means coeval with each other, but which had evidently been built *on* at different times, as the circumstances or wants of its various occupiers had dictated. Together they made a tolerable and not unpicturesque house, considerably larger than the size of the village and church would have led one to expect. Attached to it was a large and well-kept shrubbery and garden, as luxuriant as such things in the West of England always are; and in the distance a goodly sized field (for euphony, let us call it a paddock), with two thriving and clean-looking cows grazing therein.

Ringing at the bell of the outer enclosure, Christina was answered by a clean, buxom-looking girl, with a very unmistakeable expression of surprise in her face. To her question of whether Miss Melton was at home, she was asked to walk in, and was ushered into the room which appeared to be the drawing-room. A pale little boy, with a strong resemblance to Emmy about the eyes, got up at her entry and shyly backed out at the door. She would like to have kept him, but the girl good-humouredly remarked, that Master Charlie was very shy to strangers. She then requested her name, which Christina evaded giving by begging her to inform her mistress that a friend of hers wished to speak to her. Pending this, she had time to look around her. The room was handsomely, though not ostentatiously furnished. There

were one or two good pictures, besides the portrait of a sweet, ladylike woman, with a young family around her, which Christina had no difficulty in deciding to be the late Mrs. Melton, and the usual accompaniments of female occupation and amusement spread about. On the table, among other things, was a little miniature-case, which she took up and opened. It disclosed the never-to-be-forgotten features of joyous Cecile d'Aulaincourt. It was placed there among the other treasures of the young mistress of the parsonage, ever ready to be taken up and tacitly mourned over.

After the lapse of about five minutes, the door slowly opened, and Mignonette, dressed in deep mourning, wearily entered. The sight of Christina, however, changed her whole demeanour, as if by magic. With a cry of delight, she sprang forward into her arms :—"Oh, Christina! how good of you,—I am so glad!"—and she straightway burst into tears.

"Emmy, you silly girl, you must not do that," said Christina, pressing her close in her arms, and kissing her affectionately, with the hope half-shooting through her own heart that this welcome might be the welcome of something more than her own presence; "you must not, indeed; you will make yourself ill and me too."

"It is nothing," said Emmy, through her tears; "only I am so glad to see you; I thought I should never see you again. Oh! how good of you to come!"

"I decided that I would take you by surprise," returned Christina; "but I would not have done so

if I thought you were going to be so stupid. Now Emmy, dear, do stop, or I declare I will run away again."

But that would have been a difficult matter, for Emmy clung to her most tenaciously, and seemed little inclined to leave her position in her arms even.

"You are the most provoking person to manage I ever had to deal with," continued Christina; "none of the rules which ordinarily guide human beings have any weight with you. I see I must try other means. You know, dear, that if you waste all the time in crying, I shall not get rid of a word which I intended to say before the starting of the train."

"What do you mean?" said Mignonette, looking up in surprise; "what train?"

"Why, the train that is to take me back, to be sure."

To which reply, the only remark Emmy made was—by hastily beginning to untie Christina's bonnet-strings. "You would not be so cruel," she said the while, "as to just let me see your face, and then to run away again. But," she continued, looking round, as if in half alarm that the other was in earnest, "where are your things?—you must have brought something."

"They are at the station," replied Christina, laughing at Emmy's perplexity. "Of course I could not bring them over until I knew how I should be received. And Emmy, dear, there is something else besides my luggage. Papa would make me bring that stupid maid of mine, Susan, and if I stay, you must get me a lodging for her."

"If there were three Susans we have room for them, Christina," returned the other; "but you won't want her here after to-night: why not send her home?"

"It will not be worth while, Emmy," said Christina; "I have only leave of absence for ten days in all,—two for journeys, and eight here; and Papa will not hear of my travelling alone: so you must extend your hospitality to both."

"Only a week," said Emmy, sadly; "only a week! Alas! no sooner come than I begin to dread a calamity in the parting."

"Now you must not talk in that way," said Christina, smoothing down her young hostess' shining hair with both her hands: "I have come to solace and amuse you; so you must be very happy this week; and who knows but that it may bring comfort enough with it to make even the parting endurable. You must shew me how to find the blue-bells?"

"How, blue-bells?" asked Emmy, innocently.

"Is not this the village where the blue-bells grow?"

A pang shot through the poor girl's heart at these words. It was between three and four years since she had heard the expression used. It had formerly been a piece of Herbert's poetical nonsense, and time and trouble, if they had not made her forget the expression, had so far obliterated it in her mind, that she had missed the allusion when Christina first made it. She recovered herself, however, in a moment, and said, seriously, "See how I forget; those words even were lost upon me at first."

She then rang the bell, and giving some directions about sending for Susan and the luggage, took Christina away to her own room.

Once there, the two soon fell to talking about Lamford, and what had passed there lately,—the first question, about Christina's taking some refreshment, having been summarily despatched by the latter's avowing her determination to wait for the usual hour at which the family took tea,—and the Vicar's death and Nora Deane's elopement were both discussed and lamented as they severally deserved. Christina, however, carefully avoided the topic which was the main object of her coming, feeling that she must first judge more satisfactorily on the state of Emmy's spirits before she made her approaches on the subject nearest her heart. Once, however, she was sorely puzzled by the latter's putting to her, somewhat abruptly, the following very home question,—

"But, Christina, tell me what made you come here so suddenly, and without writing to tell me?—and only for a week, too, when you promised me a much longer visit?"

"Why, you see, Emmy, Dr. Crompton went and told Papa that I was very much out of health. My long attendance on Madame d'Aulaincourt necessitated, he said, change of air, if it was only for a week: so I thought I would come and see you."

Emmy looked at her for a moment, and then replied, nestling fondly and closely to her,—"Well, I have no right to complain, seeing that it has brought you to me, though only for a week. Only, Christina dear, I must say that you do not look very ill."

Christina could hardly repress a tendency to laugh, though she put off the question as she best could: and thus they passed the time in chatting affectionately together, until Susan and the luggage arrived.

Emmy, in order to have as much of her visitor during her stay as she could, allotted her a room which was next to and communicated with her own, so that the two could converse, if they liked it, undisturbed, until a late hour of the night; as is the custom, we have been led to believe, with many young ladies of a conversational tendency who are not scrupulous about their complexions.

This being arranged, Emmy left Christina in her room to make any alteration in her dress she thought proper, and descended to look after her household duties, which, in consequence of the latter's arrival, had, during the last hour and a-half, been taking care of themselves. After a time Christina descended also. Night had closed in, and lamps had been lighted and placed. The girl who had first shewn her into the house indicated to her the dining-room, on entering into which she found the tea-things laid, and the major part of the young family assembled, sitting in groups, as if waiting for their father and elder sister. She was on the point of plunging into an acquaintance with them all at once, when a tall young girl, of about sixteen, with deep blue eyes, some colour, and very white teeth, came up to her, and said, with a mixture of frankness and awkwardness, and at the same time holding out her hand,—"If you please, Miss Percy, I am Gertrude." Of course that acquaintance was soon made, and then

the others pressing round her, she became very summarily introduced to Harriet, Jane, Robert, and Charlie, varying from the ages of twelve to six respectively. The two eldest boys, Henry and Alfred, were at school. Besides these, there was the youngest, a little boy of about four years old, who did not appear that night, and whom, on the following morning, she was somewhat startled at hearing addressed by the name of Herbert. A few minutes' reflection on this point, and on the time when he must have been born, suggested the suspicion that he had been called after the object of Mignonette's ill-fated lover, who must have been a resident at Bramsholme about that time, which suspicion was confirmed when she saw how passionately fond Emmy was of this boy, and how she lavished on him all the tenderness which it was in the power of her gentle nature to bestow. Another fact was significant; she remarked that Mr. Melton almost invariably spoke of and addressed the little fellow by his second name of Allan.

All the children, excepting Charlie, seemed rosy and strong, and had the usual complement of children's spirits; but in spite of that, they all bore the mark of having been lately made motherless. They herded together as if they missed some one, and, except in their father's presence, they shewed the want of that gentle corrective discipline which only a mother can bestow, and which even the respect which Emmy undoubtedly commanded failed to supply.

Gertrude, the next in seniority to Mignonette among the girls, was as different to her in manner and appearance as it is possible for relations to be. She was

tall, quick in movement, and with an overflow of good spirits; her face was all expression, and with no feature resembling her sister's; her voice was different, and her temper dissimilar. Though a good, affectionate sister, it required little penetration to see that she was impatient of the elder's control, and by far the most onerous part of Emmy's present position was to manage this young lady with tact and decision. All this Christina soon comprehended, and a plan very quickly sketched itself out in her brain to relieve her friend in this quarter at no distant period, by having Gertrude down to Lamford, and putting her into training under her own eyes.

Of the children that resembled Emmy, Harriet, a smart little girl of ten, was the most remarkable. Though stouter and stronger for her age, she had Emmy's face and voice; the resemblance about the mouth was almost a caricature. It is needless to say that she soon became a favourite.

It was not long before Emmy joined the party in the dining-room. She had brightened up amazingly since Christina's arrival: when she spoke to her, the bright intelligent smile which had once so cheered and fascinated one heart, lighted up her face. The children all noticed the change, and a consequent display of happiness and good spirits was the result.

While Emmy was busying herself about her duties in the room, Christina had time to scrutinize her appearance more attentively than opportunity had hitherto permitted her to do. Upstairs, for the greater part of the time, there had been no other light than that of the waning day, and Emmy had kept herself

during that time so close to her, that an undisturbed, fair scrutiny had been out of the question. Not so now; and her heart fairly sank within her as she looked upon her. Mignonette was deadly pale; her skin was quite transparent, too, in its pallor. This was chiefly remarkable in her small elegant throat, and in her face, where there was nothing to relieve it save one or two freckles that still lingered behind,—relics of the Lamford's summer sun. The weariness of manner which had characterized her first entry into the drawing-room that afternoon was not so evident to-night, but Christina had occasion to notice it subsequently, and, coupled with the pallor just described, it convinced her that Emmy's powers had been seriously overstrained, and filled her with dire alarm as to the result of the scheme which brought her down.

After some delay Mr. Melton joined them. He was a thin, spare man, of quiet exterior, with head partly bald—what hair he had, gray, and with a low, musical voice, that was very taking. His manner was subdued, and well-bred, and his greeting of Christina was unaffectedly simple and gentlemanlike. "The pleasure of seeing so great a friend of his daughter's was only equal to his sorrow that the visit was to be so short a one," he said: "but it was a very great kindness in her to make it, for Emmy was sadly in want of some relaxation." Christina soon saw how necessary his eldest daughter was to his existence; how she went about the smallest and simplest offices for him, and how he accepted her assistance, as if he were utterly unable to get on without it; and then her heart fell again.

Christina soon began to feel at home. Indeed, in spite of the scene being strange to her, and of the slight feeling of depression which the fatigue of a long journey brought with it, she had determined to make herself at home. Being naturally clever, and well-informed, she soon contrived to interest Mr. Melton, who, on his side, was not unwilling to be roused from the habitual lethargy into which severe affliction had plunged him. The young folk, too, were attracted, and after tea they crowded round her, talking, and asking questions, as if they had just met an old and intimate friend. One thing pained Christina; Emmy, as soon as she had discharged the duties which were under her immediate superintendence, came again to her side, and for nearly the whole evening, except when her presence was required for anything, remained with both her hands locked in Christina's. The circumstance seemed to strike the father, whom she could see watching his daughter with an air of painful anxiety which was inexpressibly touching.

The children begged hard, and obtained leave to sit up half an hour longer in honour of the new-comer's arrival, after which, Mr. Melton, Christina, Emmy, and Gertrude, remained, and conversed till bed-time. During this period, Christina had opportunities of fully making out Mr. Melton. He was a good and accomplished man, apparently an indefatigable parish priest, but utterly helpless in the management of his family, and of his own domestic arrangements. The loss of his wife seemed to have aggravated this defect, and without his eldest daughter, it was not easy to see how he would get through life. She seemed to be

the lamp of his existence, and her affection for, and attendance upon him, was about as beautiful a sight as can be pictured. Such a one, thank God, is seen, however, every day in this favoured Christian land of ours.

At last the evening was at an end. Prayers were said, and the family retired to rest, Emmy first taking Christina to the cot of her youngest brother, (Herbert, *his* godchild,) where she fondly kissed the rosy, sleeping boy, as was her nightly custom.

But the two girls did not go to bed as quickly as they might have done. There was so much to speak of, about Madame d'Aulaincourt, and poor Cecile, and Nora, and Bella Dillwyn, all over again; about everybody, in short, save one; and to him Christina, ever careful not to injure her cause by over haste, did not think proper to allude even.

The door of communication between the two rooms was left open, and Emmy's restless night, the stillness of which was constantly interrupted by her low murmurs and disjointed sentences,—evidences of a heart not at ease,—told Christina but too well that she was unhappy, that the finger of the past had affixed its seal upon her mind, and that her heart, as well as her countenance, was destined to carry till death the impress of that early ineffaceable sorrow.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOOKING UPWARDS.

What though the brightness dim, the pleasure fade,
The glory wane? Oh! not of these is made
The awful life that to your trust is given,
Children of God, inheritors of heaven!
Mourn not the perishing of each fair toy,—
Ye were ordain'd to *do*, not to enjoy;
To *suffer*, which is nobler than to dare.
A sacred burden is this life you bear:
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;
Stand up and walk beneath it stedfastly;
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win;
God guard you, and God speed you on your way.

MRS. FANNY KEMBLE.

THE experience of one more day served to shew Christina that all hope of success in her scheme was at an end. She did not essay to speak upon it until some days later still, and when she did, it was with no idea of the utility of her so doing, but only because she would not leave without putting in force every means of pleading Herbert's cause in her power. The second day shewed her what was before her. All the doubts raised by Emmy's letters were in this short space converted into certainties. She would never be Herbert's; it was beyond the power of man now to entertain even the hope. And why? It is a startling assertion we are about to make, and one

which finds few opinions to support it in this matter-of-fact age; but it is, nevertheless, a matter of conviction on our part,—a conviction, too, which it took Christina but a few hours to share most fully. Christina saw enough during the following morning and early afternoon to tell her that Emmy's heart was broken. Whether that rebellious pride which made her obstinately repulse happiness when it was so importunately offered to her, or whether the accumulation of heavy blows coming close upon each other were the cause of this, the reader of this tale will be able to judge as well as we: but that a heavy, hopeless melancholy, wearing upon a heart already torn, was bowing her down, she could not doubt. The mind was even already becoming separated from worldly thoughts, and fixing itself on visions which the healthy mortal, in a worldly sense, can never see. As Emmy called it in her letters, she was looking always forwards, she could not look backwards. She might have said with greater force, "looking upwards." Happy those, let us say, whom the drag-chain of earthly hopes cannot hold down! Happy they between whose hearts and the one absorbing object of a worldly love the tie is snapped. Sad, perhaps, to the beholder, who sees with the eyes of mortal vision, but who, after all, shall say sad, when the freedom from all its trials and its selfishness is remembered? A broken heart! broken from what? from that which brings with it only trouble and anxiety and perishable joy. And free for what? why, free to soar among the imperishable glories of immortal love!

Perhaps some of the purest and most unalloyed

happiness which Emmy ever tasted in her short day of life, was during this period of Christina's visit. The latter hardly left her side: into every little occupation, whether among the poor, or in the schools, or in her father's house, she threw herself also. The commonest subject, which possessed only a local interest, Christina made her own; and in that short time the village, when awaiting Emmy, learnt to look also for the quick, handsome brunette, who was now seen ever at her side. But this happiness, for happiness it was to the poor bruised and bleeding flower, was to be but short, as such in this life ever must be. The few quiet days, the Sunday at the little village church—the labours at the school, the tranquil visits among the poor, the teaching of Mr. Melton's young family, passed as mere moments; and to-morrow is the day when Lamford again will look for its bravest and most fragrant flower.

But two days before this, Christina had spoken on the one subject, and spoken in vain. It was a rainy afternoon. She and Emmy were alone in the drawing-room, the rest of the family being above, in the school-room. It was a painful duty, for Christina never doubted the result now: but she felt she should not be happy unless it were discharged, and she might not meet again an opportunity so favourable. They were seated on the sofa, Emmy's hand, as usual, locked in hers, when Christina thus began:—

"There is one subject, Emmy, on which I have at present said nothing, because I would not distress you, but on which I would fain speak now: you know what it is. May I speak?"

Emmy's head drooped, and for a moment she did not reply; then in a low voice she answered, "Speak, but let it be for the last time."

"In writing to you about him," said Christina, "I have said little enough, only so much, indeed, as I thought would interest without paining you. I have told you but little more than of his adversity, and of the noble soul which shines forth brighter in it than before; but I have said nothing of our confidence together, of how we have talked, and hoped, and dreamed together, that 'this cloud also would prove to have a silver lining.'"

"It must have been some consolation to him, this, at all events," said Emmy, in a low tone; and as she spoke, her head rested on the elder girl's shoulder, and for the present remained there.

"I hope so," said Christina; "but the main happiness of such a confidence must always consist in the hopes to which it gives rise. What I would ask you, dear, to-day, and for the last time, is, whether you will cast him from you still. Oh! Emmy, before you answer, reflect, not so much on the result to yourself, but to him, of your conduct. Have you, moreover, any right to throw away such a gift as God has sent you in this man's love? You accept duties, as duties, more willingly and cheerfully than any woman I ever saw; have you not, by accepting Herbert's love, and by loving him yourself, taken upon you a duty which you ought to discharge? But I will not press upon you this point; you are as capable, nay, more able to judge of it than I. But I will ask you to banish the thought of your own wrong

in deciding on this matter. Granted, that he slighted and wronged you, and were it any other man, perhaps unpardonably; but he is a man of no common order: he has expiated his fault by a contrition which will cost him the happiness of a life. You are making your own life a hopeless blank: will you make his one too?"

Emmy raised her head at this, and said, keeping her eyes the while fixed upon the ground: "The wrong, if wrong it was, has long been forgiven and forgotten. I remember nothing save all his goodness, and——," here her voice began to falter, "and his love. It may please you also to know, that I agree with all you say about the effect to him, instead of to myself, in this matter. I tell you, Christina, now, that I think I acted wrongly in holding out against him on the day of that explanation at Kemp."

Christina's heart leapt.

"I thought so first, when he was in the water trying to save poor Cecile. The idea then came across me that I had been thinking only of myself in the decision I then came to. How different was his behaviour at that moment. There was he perilling his own life unselfishly for one to whom he was not bound by such a tie as I was to him, while I, thinking on the slight I had received, and brooding only on the fancy that I should not in his love get as much as my own silly imagination had once pictured that I should, was refusing to grant him that which alone could make his life endurable to him. I have realized this more fully since; and I confess," —here the poor girl's voice became almost inaudible

from emotion, "that I have wronged him far more in withholding from him that which was and ever will be his during my life, than he did me in encouraging the mistake which kept us apart."

"Emmy, dear!" said Christina, drawing the weeping girl closer to her.

"But the past cannot be recalled," continued Mignonette; "and my decision now and since that time has no reference to my pride, or to its foolish promptings. Had I remained at Kemp after Cecile's death, had my mother not been taken ill, I should probably by this time have been Herbert's wife. After the moment he brought Cecile to the surface of the water, I saw myself, and had he been with me a few days later, I should have held out no longer. It is true, I did not seem to know this when I bid good-bye to you; but I did, nevertheless: I could not speak of it, because I was stunned by the events of that terrible day, and by the news of my mother's danger. I felt it wicked to speak or think of Herbert just then. Perhaps I hardly knew what I did feel, but I speak now after reflection, anxiously courted since. Then came my mother's sickness, and her death-bed, and my father's desolation, and my promise to her, dear good mother, not to leave him; it was the last thing she asked, and it is sacred in my eyes. Let Herbert know this some day—not yet. It may serve to comfort and console him to hear, that not my own wish, but the will of God and my duty alone keeps me from him—has kept me from coming to smooth his pillow—the hard pillow of adversity. But there is yet one other cause, which I must speak of." Here Mignonette

hesitated a good deal. "You must not be alarmed, Christina, for after all it is for the best—Christina, I am dying."

A shiver ran through Christina's frame, but she could not then combat the assertion, for in her heart she felt so too. "I intended to have told you this," continued Mignonette, "before you left, but I did not wish to pain you too early. When I was at Lamford on my first visit, I used to have a good deal of Frederica Repton's confidence, and I remember thinking her very silly for saying the same of herself. But I know now that she was right. Just as she felt, so feel I now. How long I am to be spared, whether for a year, or a few months only, I do not care to enquire, but the conviction is in me; and, Christina, do you not think so too?"

Of course Christina could not say she did, and she therefore tried to evade the question. "I think, Emmy, you are ill, which is probably the cause of this morbid feeling. You have been most severely tried, bodily and mentally, but by strengthening your faith you will get over this. Let me send Herbert to you: you may not be able to leave your father now, but in another year, or year and a-half, when Gertrude is able to take your place, you can be married; and as for leaving him at all, if your father gave Herbert a title for orders, you might both live here for the present." Certainly Christina had great facility in castle-building.

Emmy shook her head.

"I could not do that. It would embitter my last hours to know I had brought back Herbert to my

side only to see me die. Oh, Christina, think of the result to him, to know that all impediments were removed, that I had forgiven and forgotten all, that I was willing to be his wife, and then for him to see me snatched away,—the cup dashed from his lips when they were actually touching the draught."

Christina could not deny the force of this position.

"No, I could not bear that," continued Emmy; "but to shew you how sincere I am, I promise this: if I should, in another six months, turn out to be mistaken—if my feeling now should prove to be what you say it is, a morbid feeling, I promise I will write to Herbert, and ask him to let me be his wife: I, who once thought it immodest to send him the token of a little flower, will do this. But, Christina, there is no hope, and for myself I do not wish it. I wish for no better lot than to be where 'the weary are at rest.'"

"Dear, dear Emmy," murmured Christina.

"When I am gone, Christina," she continued, "tell him what I have said this day, and that I died breathing a prayer for him, and asking his pardon for having repulsed his dear love. Tell him, too, that in heart I never changed, even when I would not grant his prayer; that I have loved—my God!" said the poor girl, looking up to heaven with streaming eyes, "how I have loved Herbert!"

"Hush, Emmy, be a little calm: you almost break my heart too," said Christina, who was crying bitterly also throughout this scene.

After a little, Mignonette became a little calmer. To try and move her Christina saw was useless. The

terms she had got for Herbert now were far better than she could have expected, judging from the commencement of the conversation, and depended only for success upon Emmy's being kept tranquil and contented. But even on this point she had no hope. She had seen enough in the few days she had been at Bramsholme to be convinced that Emmy's presentiment was no idle fancy; and therefore, to give Herbert hopes now, until this presentiment was removed, would be both foolish and cruel. She was anxious, however, to know more about this feeling; and when Emmy became a little calmer, she asked her about it. The latter said that the idea of having lost every hope upon earth was upon her that night when she spoke to Christina alone about conveying a note to Herbert, as they were standing in the gardens at Kemp, in the front of the old ruin. She felt it then, she said; a snap, as if from the breaking from her heart of one all-absorbing hope, and the entering, instead, of a cold feeling of desolation. But she did not realize it completely till she came home, and till the reflections encouraged by the long hours at her mother's bedside brought it home fully to her understanding. She had struggled, she said, to bear up against it, and in particular during the first keen exhibition of affliction in her father and the little ones, but it bore down all her efforts; and now she was weary of struggling, and could struggle no more. "I might do much, Christina, if you were with me a little longer, for I have been so happy these few days of your stay."

"Bear up still a while," said Christina, "and after

Christmas I will try and come again, and on a longer visit."

"After Christmas!" repeated Emmy, in a dreamy way. "Who knows? You will try and comfort him, Christina. Oh! if I could send him one message! I must see if I can write it, it is such a wish I have: *you* can't deliver it."

"Why not?"

"Because," said Emmy, with the old intelligent smile, now more beautiful from the resigned pallor of her face, lighting up her countenance, "because it concerns you. It is that he would seek consolation on that bosom where I have found so much." And she cast herself upon Christina's. "Oh! Christina, sister, friend, that you could fill my place."

Christina was deeply affected. "That should not be, Emmy: a heart so widowed ought not to seek a consolation of that kind."

"Ah! widowed long since; and by me. He said so. The weeds are there. Poor loved Herbert! for me too. Oh! that I were his for a time, were it only to spare him that."

"Let it be a comfort to think how strong he is in adversity," said Christina. Pray that he may bear all that may come as well as he has borne that; so that if for you, Emmy, he wears the weeds, at the instance of your prayers he may wear the fennel-wreath[a] also."

[a] "It gave new strength and fearless mood:
And gladiators fierce and rude
Mingled it in their daily food:
And he who battled and subdued
The wreath of fennel wore."
Longfellow, The Goblet of Life.

Thus ended all Christina's schemes to bring Herbert and Emmy together again. Whatever was to be the ultimate issue, depended upon a higher power than herself to decide. She could not say that her journey had been resultless: the certainty that nothing but the state of Emmy's health would prevent their being some day united, was something; for the rest she must trust to God. And yet, with really so much to congratulate herself upon, her heart re-echoed Emmy's words that "there was no hope." Though nearer the goal of her wishes, the accomplishment of her plans, than the experience of the past six weeks could have led her to expect that she would have been, the fact produced no feeling of triumph in her heart. A new adversary was in the field against her—a fresh obstacle, against which no human forethought could struggle. As in Dr. Crompton's wild schemes, so in her more temperate and hopeful plans, there was the stern decree which, at the conclusion of every well-arranged combination, ever steps in to remind man of his as well as their mortality—death. It was not certain in Emmy's case, she might say; but everything pointed that way, and from her inmost soul she could not discard the fear that it would be so.

The subject was never again touched upon by either herself or Mignonette, until some of the last few letters to her that the latter ever wrote. When they parted on this occasion, Emmy whispered the word to her, "Remember," in reference to the messages she had given, which were some day to be delivered to Herbert. But the subject of conversation between

them was never again revived by word of mouth. The week soon passed by,—too soon for Emmy, to whom to lose Wall-flower was now to lose a part of herself; to Wall-flower herself, for from the first moment she saw the little girl in distress at Kemp to the present time she had been becoming daily and hourly more fond of her; and to Susan, for she was lazy and stupid, and here she had neither bodily nor mental exercise to plague her.

Christina was often now tempted to wonder how it was she had known Emmy so long without appreciating her. When the latter had been at Lamford on her first visit she had seen nothing in her either to admire or attract, and the hyperbolic manner in which all the men at that time spoke of her, did not tend to remedy her deficiency of discrimination in this particular. But now she found herself looking upon her as the sweetest and tenderest of women, discovering beauties at every moment, and even seeing defects in herself when placed beside her excellent little hostess. It was strange, certainly, for except in the sterling goodness which was relatively the attribute of each, the two were as different as two young women can be, both in temper, person, intellect, and cultivation of mind. But such instances, though rare, do occur. *Les extremes se touchent:* and Wall-flower and Mignonette were examples of the fact.

And so she was to return home on the morrow. It was afternoon, and the two had been walking in the parsonage garden together, when Emmy was called into the house on some unimportant errand. Christina thought that this would afford her a good oppor-

tunity for visiting Mrs. Melton's grave, from which she had hitherto kept away, in consequence of always being with one or other of the family, whose presence suggested feelings of delicacy against her going thither. The churchyard was hard by, and a few steps brought her to the desired spot. To her mind there was something exceedingly touching in the sight,—the simple, well-kept green mound, and the simpler cross above it, profusely covered with the equally simple floral offerings of the young hearts the deceased lady had left behind. After some moments spent in contemplation, and in a short prayer for the orphans, especially for that one who was the object of her own chief solicitude, she was turning to depart, when she found herself, awkwardly enough, as she thought, almost face to face with Mr. Melton. He smiled, held out his hand, and pressed hers as she extended it.

"It was kind of you to come here," he said, pointing to the grave. "I was wondering the other day whether you would visit it."

She did not know exactly what answer to make to this, but she muttered something about fearing to be in the way.

"Do not say anything about that," he interrupted; "I am taught to believe by one who never errs,"—he meant his daughter,—"that your motives are always pure and single-minded. Is it fixed that you go to-morrow?"

"I am afraid so, to my sorrow," she replied.

"Thanks," he returned. "Before you go, may I ask you, as one deeply interested in knowing, what is your candid opinion of Emmy?"

Christina felt that she could not give her candid opinion: she contented herself with just saying a part, therefore.

"I think Emmy is ill," said Christina, "not in body, but severe affliction; and some little attendance on those who required it have worn her somewhat out."

"You think worse of her than that, Miss Percy," said the old man. "It is perhaps kindly meant of you not to speak out, but it won't deceive me. Shall I tell you what I think?"

Christina really wished he would not, but she could offer no objection, and therefore merely assented by a gesture.

"You see this knoll," said the old gentleman; "it covers the loved and honoured remains of her mother. In the dead of the night, when trouble and memories banish sleep, a voice whispers to me, that beside it, ere many months be passed, another will rise which will cover her daughter."

"Oh! Mr. Melton, do not say so," said Christina, the tears filling her eyes.

"I cannot pray that it should not be," continued the father. "Her life for the past year has been such an accumulation of wretchedness, that to wish her to live would be to wish her miserable. And if it were only out of gratitude to her for the blessing which for two-and-twenty years she has shed over our home, I would wish her peace."

"I cannot think matters so bad as that," said Christina, struggling against her emotion and her convictions. "Try a little of her faith and trust, Mr. Melton."

"Which I fear even in her is now well-nigh exhausted," he replied, with a bitter smile; "you know her early sorrow?"

"All of it," was the answer.

"It is a curious entanglement," replied the old gentleman; "and when I go over it, at times, I try to think that the blame has not been all mine, though I have no right to complain of the result. What embittered her mother's latter days was, that she betrayed her child's wandering thoughts to me; and if that were so, shall not my last hours be embittered by the memory of what I did?"

"Indeed, Mr. Melton, you are wrong to talk so," broke in Christina. "I do think that the two lovers have stood as much in their own light as ever you or Mrs. Melton did, and if it be any comfort to you, I may state my firm conviction, that if Emmy's health will only mend, all will come right in that direction yet."

"Well, it is a relief to know that," he replied: "but then," he continued, despondingly, "Emmy's health won't mend. I will tell you what, in my idea, is the only chance for it to mend, and that is by your staying with her a few weeks longer; you cannot have any idea of the difference your presence has made in her this one short week."

"I am sure you know, Mr. Melton," returned Christina, "that there is nothing I would more gladly do than stay to help and nurse Emmy, if necessary, and if I consulted only my own inclinations. But I, too, have duties to call me. I, too, have a sick mother, and every instance of your daughter's devotion to her

parents strikes a dart into my own heart in respect of what is required of me to mine. The fact is, I cannot stay; but I will promise to come down as soon after Christmas as is possible, and I will then stay a month with her, at least."

"You are a good, brave girl," said Mr. Melton, "for that, at all events: only we shall not let you off then under two months."

"A good, brave girl," said Emmy's voice, as she came behind them, and wound her arm round Christina's waist; "those are not half good enough words for her; she is the best, the truest, the bravest in God's world."

And Christina will never forget the look of her sweet young face as she uttered those words. For that moment only, all her weariness, all her despondency, even all her pallor seemed cast aside, and she looked what she did in her best days,—her face lighted up, her eyes beaming with that exquisite softness which was their characteristic, and her even white teeth shining forth her satisfaction. It was the last time Christina ever saw her look so.

Later in the evening, Emmy asked what she and her father had been talking of. Christina told her that part of the conversation which referred to her own proposed visit to Bramsholme after Christmas, or after the new year.

"After Christmas, or after the new year!" Emmy repeated, in a low tone to herself, almost imperceptibly shaking her head.

"Yes, after the new year," continued Christina; "that is, I suppose it will not be before the middle of

January. And I will tell you what my plan will be. If I cannot get you, Emmy, to come back with me, I shall take Gertrude for a month or two to Lamford, and there keep her under my own eye: that will be some trouble off your hands; and when she returns, you will find her such a smart person, that you will be able to resign the reins of government to her, and take a holiday for yourself, and then—and then, Emmy, there will be the conclusion after the manner of all romances."

"Yes," said Emmy, with a sad smile, "but not after the manner of tales in real life; whatever may happen in romances, Christina, this is certain, that in every story of real life which has incident in it to make it worth telling, the people do *not* marry, and are *not* happy for ever afterwards."

Emmy was nevertheless pleased with Christina's thoughtful schemes for her comfort and relief, and listened to them till the night was far advanced.

The real parting between the two took place also in their rooms before Christina started from the parsonage next morning, though Emmy and Gertrude both accompanied their visitor as far as the station at Bart. "Think of me, Christina, when I am gone," she said, while the latter was getting ready for the journey; "I shall be happier in going, if I know that I have always a place in your heart; and if ever you come down again to Bramsholme, kiss my poor little brother, Herbert, for my sake."

"Emmy, you must not talk so."

"God bless you, Christina," continued the other,

clinging to her convulsively; "comfort him, oh, comfort him!"

"Dear Emmy, you will comfort him yourself some day."

"No, never again, Christina dear, either you or him. Never again: this is my last adieu."

She spoke truly: Christina never saw her again.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOMEWARDS.

Thro' childhood's morning-land serene
  She walked betwixt us twain, like love ;
  While in a robe of light above
  Her better angel walkt unseen,
Till life's highway broke bleak and wild—
  Then, lest her starry garments trail,
  In mire, heart bleed, and courage fail,
The angel's arms caught up the child.

GERALD MASSEY.

IF people had been surprised at hearing Dr. Crompton's verdict on Christina's state of health before she started for Bramsholme, they expressed most readily their acquiescence in it on her return, for, if her face then betokened a constitution overtaxed, its appearance might have been fairly taken to indicate the reverse now. Christina returned home anxious and dispirited. However favourable her approaches to the one subject had been received, however promising the response that Mignonette had made to them, she could not but feel that the ultimate fulfilment of her hopes was as far off as ever. Hence, she who had looked roseate and healthy when she started to recruit her energies, appeared thin in face and depressed in manner when she returned.

Madame d'Aulaincourt was inexpressibly shocked when she heard her report in full. She, of all people,

could least supply the want occasioned by Christina's despondency. If anything, her state of mind led her to look on the dark side of things also. No enlivening prospect proceeded then from her, and the two women moped over the future in concert. Dr. Crompton, however, was not quite so bad as that: whatever opinion he really entertained, when he had listened to all that Christina had to tell, he was too orthodox a doctor to join in a dirge over any symptoms, and he straightway began to put a good face on the matter. "It was unfortunate," he said, "that there was not some maiden aunt to come and take care of old Melton and worry the younger children,—there always was one," he knew, "when one was not wanted,"—and then Emmy might have had change of scene and relaxation. But even as matters stood, and looking upon them in their worst light, the young lady," he should think, "could hardly put herself out of the world under four months: by which time you will be back there, my dear," (to Christina). "You ought to have stayed, as it is; I would have managed all with your father."

"I am sure Christina acted quite rightly," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, seriously.

"You would not think so if the young lady were to die," said the Doctor, with a comical look.

"Pray do not talk so, Dr. Crompton," said Christina: "you do not think that."

"But *you* do," replied the perverse old gentleman: "and you have better means of judging than I, and therefore you should have stayed. They could have done without you here."

But as this mode of talking seemed rather to tease both his listeners, he forthwith thought it his duty to try and cheer them up a little: "Come, come," he said, "I do not think there is any harm done. You must get down there again as soon as you can, Christina, and bring the little maiden up here; and after that, the best thing will be to take these young people to church whether they will or not, and get Motcombe to marry them in handcuffs. A couple of babies! to go playing with their happiness in the way they have!"

"But, Doctor, about Emmy until I do go down? It is that which makes me so unhappy," said Christina.

"I have no fear about her," said the Doctor, "if her bodily health continues good. An illness of any sort, in her present state, might suggest cause for uneasiness; but if her health continues good, there is time enough."

This was some comfort to Christina, and, with heart a little lighter, she turned herself to the not very easy task of acquainting Herbert, by letter, with the result of her visit. This required tact. To tell her own forebodings, after what the Doctor had said, would be silly. To report to him the prospects that were in store for him, if Emmy's health did not fail, would be contrary to the latter's expressed wish; and, as it would also amount to raising hopes in him which might too soon be dashed, it would moreover be cruel. All she could do, therefore, was to inform him that Emmy was far from well; that, though her approaches on the one subject had met with no repulse, nevertheless, from the recent death of her mother, and her

father's affliction consequent thereupon, no definitely favourable answer could be elicited; but that she believed the early spring would be the harbinger of new hopes to them all. To this she added that it might be a comfort to him to have her, Christina's, conviction, that Emmy's affection to him was unchanged, and that she by no means adhered to those views, which she had expressed on the day of the explanation at Kemp. Finally, in begging Herbert to keep a good heart, she suggested that Emmy's position with regard to her father no doubt had something to do with her present unwillingness to hear much on this subject. Mr. Capel could not be ignorant that for the present the latter looked only to his daughter for comfort to himself, and for management of the large family left orphans by the late bereavement; and that it was natural for a girl so well and religiously brought up as Emmy, to look at it as little short of a sin, the giving a thought even to her own hopes in face of so sacred a duty. But this difficulty, such as it was, could be but temporary; and she, Christina, anxiously looked forward to the time appointed for her second visit, as to that which would bring him sunshine after so many storms.

All which deceived Herbert not one *iota*. He thankfully took the letter for what it was worth, perceiving that Christina really was in possession of some hopeful prospect, but as equally convinced that there was something behind which she either dared not, or was forbidden to, tell.

He answered her, therefore, thankfully, without disclosing his real views upon her letter, but express-

ing his conviction, that if happiness was in store for him it would be owing to her efforts, and assuring her of his never-changing gratitude and regard.

And how fared it with Emmy all this time? Precisely as it did with her before Christina's visit. After her departure, she fell into the same course of mechanical duty which she had pursued hitherto. The enjoyment of life, which had been slightly rekindled by her friend's presence, went out again, like a flame lacking material to feed it; and listlessly, wearily, and without energy, she went through her mechanical day. The early duties of instruction to the younger children, the cares of the village during the more advanced morning, the answering her own and many of her father's letters in the afternoon, the breakfast, dinner, and tea, even the somewhat irritating process of controlling Gertrude's hastiness and impatience, were all gone through mechanically, and without seeming to strike a spark of sympathy from her own breast. Not even the mention of Christina's second visit, to which Mr. Melton had recourse now and then, had power to produce more than a passing smile. In her inmost heart she felt that this would not be. It was not that the presentiment of early dissolution contained any fixed idea of time or circumstances, but that something would happen which would prevent or delay Christina's coming till after that event occurred, seemed to her certain. The prospect, therefore, was powerless to rouse her, and she went on, day after day, more and more cast down by the morbid despondency of her mind.

If she read or wrote, it was the same thing: her

eyes passed over the pages of her book, line after line, without her being aware of what she was reading. It was not that she was inattentive, or that her mind was busy elsewhere; it rather lacked power to be attracted; it seemed to have lost its reflective capacity. She had no regrets; nothing of the past excited feelings of sorrow or even pleasure. Nor was it that she was unhappy: she felt herself, rather, a mere machine, impelled to certain duties, without knowing why or how, and that she was able to do them was the only satisfaction she had.

The sole exception to this consisted in her father and her youngest brother, Herbert; with the former she could converse with some appearance of interest in the subject in hand, and the latter alone had power to call up the old rich intelligent smile, the one great beauty, which had placed her above all rivals. And the old gentleman, when he perceived this, felt himself drawn also more closely to the little fellow, who, from the sponsorial relation which he boasted towards the once suitor of his daughter, had not always stood so high in his favour. And this circumstance would call forth something akin to joy in the poor girl's heart. "Oh, Papa," she said one day, with a burst of feeling she seldom now evinced, "always love little Herbert for my sake, always love him;" and the old man thought with bitterness, was not the time coming when he should love for her sake every object that had been ever hallowed by her presence? The time, indeed, was not distant; it came upon them all by surprise, even upon Emmy herself, though she accepted everything as the result of a

just decree. Christmas came, a sad one in that parsonage, where, for the sake of the little ones, some show of festivity was attempted to be kept up; though to Gertrude, Emmy, and their father, it brought only sad thoughts and memories of other Christmases, spent with the dear loved mother who had gone. Christmas came and went, and the new year opened, and Christina's letters spoke of her certain visit in the third week of its first month. But the decree had gone forth. The winter was very severe. Many of our readers may remember it, that winter of '49-'50. We, indeed, have good cause to do so. Emmy, after passing some hours on one of those first days of January with a sick woman in a hot cottage, took cold on returning home, and was for a week laid up with a sore throat. From her being out of health, perhaps, the attack at first assumed rather a malignant character, which necessitated the employment of stringent remedies; and though these removed the complaint itself, her constitution could not rally from their action. A few days of favourable progress, and then a gradual sinking for one week more, and Emmy's lamp of life went out. Christina was full of her arrangements for the expected journey, when the news arrived that "Emmy slept in peace." The little flower had faded and drooped, and—Mignonette was no more!

Brush the tears from thine eyes, Herbert. Do they blind thee? Are they bitter? As thou hast sown, so dost thou reap. Bitter was the pride that prompted thee to pluck her in time past from thy heart; bitter the folly which led thee to obey it!

Bitter was the choking of that young heart, when it looked and looked in vain day after day for its promised lord! Bitter was the line of duty which it marked out for itself, and to the last so unflinchingly followed! Bitter was the anguish which struck from it the despairing words of the childless and widowed Naomi! Bitter, then, should be thy tears. Aye, brush them from thine eyes, Herbert, those bitter, briny, scorching drops,—not more bitter nor more harsh to them than should be the news thou hast just heard to thy own proud heart.

And there is a bitter cry, too, in that parsonage by night, for, as of old, the first-born of the house is cut off; the child of early joy, the first-fruits of the union of two loving ones, is taken away. Another blow to those children, who looked to the lost one to supply a mother's place; another sorrow to the father, who in that lost one saw but the reflection of the mother's worth!

Cold, pale, and inanimate lies that form now which once gave life, and health, and hope to all around her. Even in death she wears on her lips that bright smile, once so fascinating and so dear; and though it tells of no presence now, for the lifeless clay shall not *yet* move again, perchance it is the spirit's legacy to the dear ones left behind, assurance of the joy the sister feels at a welcome she is receiving in her home of peace and rest. But no corresponding smile is seen in the house of woe. Bitter, again, as the tears she shed at Kemp are those of the survivors—from the grief of bold and passionate Gertrude, now recalling every trouble she once gave her gentle, patient sister—from

the violent sobs of now weary and sleeping little Herbert, to the mute gray hairs and stricken heart of the father, seeking through the midnight hours for comfort in the Book of God.

In her home and in the cottage, in the school and by the bedside of the lowly, is her loss felt. She was a flower that brought light, and life, and fragrance with her presence, and many is the heart that even this night bewails her early fate. The passing-bell which on the first break of day tells of the spirit that has fled, raises a hundred other tongues in sad witness of the tale.

Rest be to her gentle spirit, peace to the scene of her unpretending labours, and may

> "Angels with their silver wings o'ershade
> The spot once sacred by her presence made."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LAST LOOK AT OLD FACES.

All are scattered now, and fled;
Some are married, some are dead:
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
Ah! when shall they *all* meet again,
As in days long since gone by?
The ancient timepiece makes reply—
For ever never,
Never for ever. LONGFELLOW.

These have we named: on life's rough sea they sail,
With many a prosperous, many an adverse gale.—CRABBE.

THE death of the chief heroine of these pages warns us that our labours are nearly closed. We must wind up shortly the fortunes of those who have figured in them, and then make our bow. Shortly after this Christmas, Edward Wordsworth, with Nora his wife, were received at Natchetts. The former is to this day but just tolerated by his wife's parents, while the latter, doubtless, owes much of the kind treatment she meets with at her old home to pity for the sorrows which her imprudent marriage has brought upon her. That these would result from such a step most of our readers have no doubt foreseen. Her husband obtained a small government appointment, at the Colonel's instance, which gives him some sort of a position, and is a sufficient excuse for his not burdening Nora with too much of his presence; but

though he is not so unsteady as might have been expected from his antecedents, he is a tyrant at home to his wife and to his children, of which she has at this present speaking presented him with three—two boys and one girl. Nora never knew the deceit he practised upon her—a wise and merciful dispensation—though the fact is pretty generally understood in other quarters. The old Colonel is delighted with his grandchildren, to whom he has transferred much of the affection he once bestowed on his son and daughter. His son-in-law in general treats him with deference, for he expects a fortune from him some day in right of his wife. Arthur Deane went to the Crimea, and was killed at Inkermann; at which great battle, to his credit be it said, he did not pursue that course which so much damaged his reputation on the fatal day at the "Mouse."

The new Vicar came to Lamford in due course, and began by making more changes than ever his Tractarian predecessor would have dreamt of doing. Some little noise ensued in consequence at first, but on the whole, I think that Lamford gets on as well as most other parishes; and as the Vicar is a hard-working, energetic, well-meaning man, he commands pretty well the esteem of all parties, who, with few exceptions, accept him and his mode of working readily enough.

Of the curates, Strong was to leave, as already hinted; Motcombe desired to do the same of his own accord, although the Vicar, deferring to the generally expressed wish of the parish, was willing to retain him. The question, however, was set at rest at this juncture by the falling in of the im-

portant living of Market Roden, in Nottinghamshire, which had long been promised him, and to which he shortly repaired, followed by the good wishes of all Lamford. Here Herbert occasionally visits, and passes a few weeks with, him.

Motcombe wished to take Trevanion with him as his curate, but the latter preferred the scene of his labours hitherto, and he alone of the three remained in Lamford. It was a self-sacrifice, his doing so, and therefore all the more meritorious.

Of Christina, and the remaining flowers of our bouquet, we shall have a few words to say before we close. One, the Snowdrop, hitherto known as Miss Blanche Neeld of Bolder, married a year after Emmy Melton's death; and being light, slim, and elegant-looking, she chose a stout, hearty, red-faced fox-hunter, which made her marriage one of those unaccountable instances of human mating which we see so often in this world. But he has a considerable fortune, and is out all day. What can a woman want more? We leave to the reader to decide.

Both Mrs. Harbottle's daughters are also married: one to a clergyman in the neighbourhood, who, being a High Churchman, Harbottle thinks to be another part of the fate which pursues him on these subjects; the other to an officer in the Indian army, who consequently, with her husband, never gladdens his sight at all. We have reason to believe that both these matches have turned out happily.

As our readers have no doubt foreseen, Hethering-ton and Bella Dillwyn made up their differences before long. Motcombe's departure for his living, in

convincing the one of the groundlessness of his jealousy, and the other of the vanity of any distant hope with regard to him, perhaps contributed to this result. They were married in the course of the following autumn. Dillwyn senior, in spite of his resemblance to a post, had contrived in his professional career to lay by a tidy sum of money, with a part of which he "came down" on the wedding-day. This assistance enabled Hetherington to effect a partnership with Dr. Crompton, who, becoming old, was not sorry for the arrangement, which contributed much to his comfort, as well as to the benefit of the neighbourhood, besides fulfilling the darling wish of Hetherington's heart, which was to preserve his connection with his native place all his days. He has a family. On the last occasion we had the pleasure of seeing him, which is some time since, Mrs. Hetherington had just presented her husband with a daughter, so unmistakably resembling her own father, the "dumb waiter," in feature, that we, used as we are to express neatly that conventional compliment, had not the face to notice that it was "the image of its parents," for which fault we undoubtedly went down to zero in the thermometer of nurse's estimation.

Trevanion remained at Lamford two years, much doubting whether he was doing right in staying, as his opinions were certainly not *d'accord* with those of the new Vicar. He has since succeeded to a small living not far from Motcombe's, where he is much esteemed for his single-heartedness and piety. He is still unmarried.

The Trenthams removed to London. The worthy

Doctor had left them well off, and they had many connections in the metropolis. Poor old Mrs. Trentham wanted to remain in Lamford, and even suggested the house she should take for the purpose. She longed to be among her old women, who had, as it were, grown up in the place with her; but Clarinda and the eldest daughter overruled this, and, as we think, with reason. The widow and family of a deceased Vicar who remain after his death in the place of his ministrations are liable, under the most favourable circumstances, to meet with some little mortification. From the first persons in the place they invariably sink into nobodies. The new-comer is pretty sure to have a different way of working, and perhaps a better way, because, like the age, he will be in advance of all old systems. His acts, therefore, will be always compared with those of his predecessor, and, in most instances, to the latter's disadvantage. The superseded ones will have, moreover, the mortification of seeing many of their own favourites frowned upon, their own plans upset, and themselves (we speak comparatively) gradually forgotten. Private life is a pleasant thing, but even under most favourable circumstances it will not answer in the very place where one's public life has been passed. This Clarinda felt; and so, after an affecting but rather comical leave-taking with Mr. Strong, which left little mark on that disinterested individual, who was then engaged in the important business of counting his own chickens previous to his departure, she carried her mother and two younger sisters off to London, where many of our readers have doubtless by this time met and become acquainted with them.

Walter Harbottle, deprived of both his flames, thought himself an ill-used man, and took to melancholia and a tendency to the bottle; to obviate which his father bought him a commission in a fast cavalry regiment, which he did not suit, for the gallant officers in that well-known corps proceeded, with the view of getting rid of him, to subject him to a series of practical jokes, such as shaving off *one* of his whiskers, converting his feather-bed into a water-bed, turning his room into a farm-yard, destroying his property, &c., which were too much for his constitution and his forbearance. So he exchanged; but his luckless fate pursuing him through several other distinguished corps in the service, he found himself, after many perils, finally landed in a quiet, slow-going infantry regiment, the reputation of which he very much raised by running away with the portionless daughter of an attorney in a county town, whom he married, and who now lives with him in barracks on the very small income allowed him, in addition to his pay, by his infuriated parent at Castle Bank.

It must always be a matter of doubt how far Lester Harbottle's character had been influenced for good by his intimacy with Herbert Capel. That it was to his benefit is to be presumed, for about this time he made a dead halt in the expensive and rather desultory life he was pursuing. Obtaining permission from his father to that effect, he took a tour in Canada, and on his return shewed such a fancy for farming, that the old gentleman suggested his studying that useful art in Scotland for a couple of years; which, having done, he returned to practise his accomplishments on

the parental acres, to their great benefit and his father's glory ever since.

Of Papa Harbottle we have very little to say. He jogs on as usual, a little gouty, to be sure, but tolerably well. He is immense friends with the new Vicar, whom he styles the model of a "Protestant clergyman." He looked for some time with suspicion on Trevanion, though without in the least discomposing that gentleman's tranquillity. And he subjects every new curate to the most rigid examination, mentally, of course, with a view of detecting a secret dispensation from the Pope, or other little matters of deceit which he believes to be peculiar to Churchmen of a Tractarian tendency. The last I heard of him was that, at the suggestion of some wag, he had been innocently induced to forbid his gardener forcing or growing another Auricula on his domain, (Castle Bank had been renowned time out of mind for these flowers,) as he was informed it was the sure sign now-a-days of those who were pledged to the "*Romish heresy* of confession!"

The Rev. Mr. Strong had a handsome testimonial presented to him on leaving Lamford: it was of the useful shape which generally characterizes such matters, and bore an inscription testifying to his many exertions in the place, "in testimony of the sense of which his many admirers," &c. Now granting, for the sake of argument, all this meed of praise to the patriotic Strong, we protest against the system of giving plate to priests for discharging what is only their office. It is a wonder to us that some of our eminent Churchmen have not called attention to this

matter before. A testimonial of personal regard from parishioners to their pastor is, no doubt, all very well, but it should be distinctly understood that it is only such. A handsome present for the good which Mr. —— has done for the parish, which of late has been very much the fashion, must, in the eyes of all true Churchmen, be, to say the least of it, a very questionable proceeding.

However, Strong got his testimonial, and bid adieu to Lamford. In course of time he found another curacy, a sole charge this time, and entered upon it after the necessary preliminaries. There he is as popular as it is in the nature of things in this world for such a man to be. He goes about doing good in the same blunt, energetic, uncivil manner as he did in Lamford, with the same roughness of exterior, and the same real goodness of heart underneath. We wish him many years of prosperity and usefulness.

Dr. Crompton is, barring a little mark of the hand of time, as good-humoured and brisk as ever. He is not quite so active, but since he took Hetherington into partnership this circumstance is not of such great account. About two years ago he was a little shaken by the death of his sister, with whom he had lived in harmony for so many years, but he seems to have got over that now. The old lady's latest wish was for the presence of Mrs. Martin, whose relationship to the late Lord Melbourne she proclaimed with great distinctness on the very day on which she died. The old Doctor, too, preserves his peculiarities—that of reminding young ladies oftener than is necessary that he brought them into the world, being among them.

So much for Lamford in general. As time gets on, the usual changes which time brings can be noticed even here: fresh young faces, fresh tombstones—all marks of the progressing hour on the dial of an age. Who that has read these pages can fancy Bella Dillwyn a matron?—yes, not only in look, but in fact;—or can picture her merry, laughing face, which never knew a care, now drawn painfully on the subject of holes in her children's frocks, or anticipating the short-comings of her cook at this evening's dinner? And yet these things are to be really expected in the course of human events, though, as they meet our gaze in every-day life, we, like unaccountable mortals that we are, are surprised at them.

The shock of Emmy's death came so suddenly upon Christina, that for a few days she was completely unnerved. She was aware of the former's illness, and had been duly informed of what was then considered her convalescence. The unexpected and untoward conclusion, therefore, conveyed with Gertrude's strong expressions of grief, and coming only three days before she herself was to start on a visit to the invalid, was the more bitter, in that her fears on that subject had now been almost entirely dispelled. To say that she was grieved would not be the correct expression. When one speaks of a person's grief, we mean, in general, the suffering incurred by the loss of the loved object to that person's *self*. But Christina's was the highest class of Christian sorrow. Besides her own loss, she had to mourn the loss to others, which she did with all her heart; the loss to the father, and to all those sorrowing little

ones, and, above all, the loss to one other—him—Herbert. It filled her with dread to reflect upon the result of the news on him. For some days, therefore, she was completely unnerved. Then, as her old habits of thought returned upon her, the desire to be of use and to help the sufferers arose in full force; and the idea of acceding to Gertrude's anxious desire that she would come to them nevertheless, and teach them to comfort their father, as well as to assist her in filling the place she was called on so suddenly to assume, gained ground. After taking counsel from the Doctor and Madame d'Aulaincourt, she resolved to go down to them after the funeral—which she did. Perhaps the inducement to do so which swayed her most was the pleasure it would give Herbert, and she knew how much consolation he would want, poor fellow, now.

Her presence at Bramsholme was, indeed, a real boon. Hard as Gertrude tried to fill Emmy's place as she thought the latter had filled it, her temper, and the trying circumstances which called on her to do so, were against her, and Christina found the whole family at sixes and sevens. To restore it to the same order as it had been in former days was, perhaps, beyond her powers; but during the month she was there she made matters tolerably straight, and as both Gertrude and the rest were anxious to learn from so good an instructress, she left them with the fair promise of their remaining in the same condition.

To attempt to depict Herbert's horror and consternation at his beloved's sudden decease is not in our province. It would not be an easy matter, in the

first place, and it would seem equivalent to indulging a morbid feeling for the painful, in the second. It will be sufficient to say that he had never really felt unhappiness till that moment. It has already been suggested that he had given up all hopes of ever calling Emmy his wife, and he had from time to time especially renewed this avowal to Christina, with the view both of preventing her raising her own hopes too high in the prosecution of that end, as well as of guarding himself against disappointment. But, until the blow came, he was not really aware of the state of his own heart on this point at all. The fact is, that mankind continually labours under this species of self-deceit: we are daily and hourly expressing our own convictions that projects will fail or schemes not succeed, and so that we shall not be disappointed, upon which, until they do fail, we do not perceive how far we have really set our hearts. And so with Herbert. Emmy would never be his wife, and his heart could not suffer disappointment in any scheme set on foot towards making her so; but he never knew what his heart really could suffer until her loss was beyond recall.

About a fortnight after her death, Christina sent him up a little packet Emmy had left him, together with a record of all she had said respecting him, and the messages she had enjoined her to give him on that first visit of hers to Bramsholme. The former contained the few little presents she had made him in days gone by, and which he had restored at her father's request at the end of the first year of their ill-fated engagement. These she wished him to take again, as

well as a simple, though intrinsically valueless, gold ring bearing the device of a "Forget-me-not," which she had worn since her girlhood, and which she thought he would prize.

There was a letter also, written a little before Christmas, which expressed a presentiment of her approaching death. It was not long, and was to ask his pardon for having so cruelly and pertinaciously rejected his true love. She now confessed her fault in repulsing the good gift which God had sent her, and which she was not worthy to have enjoyed; but she wished him to know that her love for him had remained unchanged, and that the happiest days of her life had been those in which she had received and returned his expressions of attachment. Perhaps, too, this letter said something about Christina; perhaps it expressed love and gratitude for her single-hearted devotion, and hinted a hope that if ever his heart should get over the deep affliction which she knew her death would cause him, he would seek consolation at *her* hands, who had done so much to render it to both already. Perhaps it said something of this kind. But however that may be, this part has not yet been realized. Herbert has been so bitterly punished for his partial infidelity, that ever since he has been true to his first love. He, too, repulsed the good gift, although fortune and position were showered upon him to enable him to enjoy it; and the result was a just retribution for his fault. The good gift was withdrawn from him at the time when he tardily stretched his hand to grasp it, and he was removed from that fine inheritance which he received

before he broke his vows. As he said he would, he has worn the weeds, and his heart wears them still.

He has applied himself to literary pursuits since he left Bickerton, and every gain he has received from those exertions he has devoted to charitable uses; and of latter years he has joined this aid, as well as his own personal efforts, to forwarding the benevolent schemes for reclaiming the destitute and profligate, lately set on foot in St. George's-in-the-East and other city parishes. He has often been recommended to take Holy orders, but has at present declined, conceiving that his example, as a lay-worker, may be more useful than if he formed part of the clergy. Between him and Dacre the old friendship exists. The latter is unmarried, but has a working curacy in the north, which he fills with diligence and sagacity, but with the same outward appearance of *sang-froid* which he always carried.

Before we finally quit Lamford, it will please our readers to know that all Herbert's schemes for the benefit of the neighbourhood were carried out by Mr. Edmund Wordsworth. Lamm's Ferry has its resident curate. The new lord of Bickerton is a favourite; the mildness of his manners and his desire to please have won him a good place in the esteem of most, and his religious opinions have passed muster with even old Mr. Harbottle. He is not married, but it is not improbable that he may be, for Lamford still keeps up the reputation of its daughters, and he is popular among the ladies.

Mr. Melton bore his second deprivation well and bravely. Perhaps he had taken a lesson from the

untiring patience of his elder girl, which the somewhat quick temper of Gertrude, his second, must often by contrast have brought to his recollection. But his health had never been strong, and he was getting on in years. Without, therefore, attributing his death to any other than natural causes, we have to record it in two years after that of Mignonette. It was delayed long enough for him to get his two eldest sons started in the world, by procuring them appointments in India, which were not open in those days, and sending them out thither. This was lucky; for an enquiry into his affairs at his decease revealed the fact that his young family were fortuneless. Herbert, on hearing this, proposed to Christina to yield up the annuity he had derived from Admiral Ayscough's last will for their support, his own exertions being sufficient to provide means for himself. But this proved unnecessary. Gertrude had announced her intention of going out as a governess, an intimation which filled him with pain and alarm; but Madame d'Aulaincourt discovering that she was in want of a companion, offered her the situation, and such an offer from Emmy's friend and the mother of Cecile was too good a one for even her first high-flown notions of self-sacrifice to resist. So she took the place of the dead flowers at Kemp. The situation of course was created for her, and had no duties connected with it which were not pleasures. A married sister of Mrs. Melton's, poor enough herself, took the next two girls for the present. Robert and Charlie went to school, at Herbert's expense, where also now is little Herbert, who always spends the Christmas holidays with his god-papa; and the latter keeps that festive season in trying to discover

fresh likenesses between the little chap and his dead sister. Some of the arrangements thus set on foot have become, in the course of years, slightly modified. But as it may be our lot to have to place them before our readers some day in a more extended form, we do not propose to proceed with the history of this family further now.

Madame d'Aulaincourt lives still a resigned and contented life, shewing a little the marks of time, but is ever the same gentle, kind lady as heretofore. Herbert continually visits her, and they talk of their mutual bereavements, and of the dear ones that are asleep, and of his short but brilliant reign at Bickerton; and he surveys the old ruin with mingled feelings of happiness and regret. But the home of his heart is not here—it ever lingers, where she sleeps, down in the village "where the blue-bells grow."

And Christina—what words can paint what she is? None: these pages have told already full well. She remains the same. Between her and Herbert a mutual, unchangeable regard exists, which might become a warmer feeling if he wished it. But she is content to accept what is—she neither complains nor expects more. And yet her life can hardly be said to be a happy one. There are not in the common routine of a village daily life sympathies sufficient to fill so large a heart, and a lingering craving for something to interest her whole nature, clings to her. She has it not; and at times the want depresses her, and she is cast down. But she is high-principled and religious, and ever has that refuge which others, who are not so, lack. Heaven bless her!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VISION OF THE MAY MOON.

My grief lies all within,
And these external manners of laments
Are merely shadows of the unseen grief,
That swells with silence in the tortured soul—
There lies the substance.—SHAKSPEARE.

To fair Fidele's grassy tomb
Soft maids and village hinds shall bring
Each opening sweet of earliest bloom,
And rifle all the breathing spring.—COLLINS.

A SUPERSTITION, which has for foundation some circumstances that followed on the death of Mignonette, has taken root in the minds of the ignorant poor at Bramsholme. The relation and the solution of it will serve as a fitting conclusion to our tale.

A few months after Emmy's remains had been consigned to the ground, a timid girl of the locality had occasion, on her road homewards from a neighbouring farm-house, to pass though the churchyard. It was a lovely night, lighted by the presence of the May moon, but at the same time on the ground there was some degree of mist, which made objects at a little distance indistinct in their outline, though plain enough as to their reality.

As the girl was nearing the angle of the church,

the passing of which would bring her to Emmy's grave, a tall shadow on the wall brought her to a stop; and as the nature of the place, and the remembrance of the latter's death came upon her, which it often did on all the young folk of the place, a dire alarm filled her mind.

After a time she turned aside, and came round the churchyard at a distance; and then through the haze she saw the figure of a man in deep grief by Emmy's grave, which her imagination and her fears at once decided not to be of this world. The head of the apparition was uncovered, and buried in its hands. On the following morning a wreath of mignonette was discovered on the grave with the other floral offerings that had been there the day before.

The superstition of the village,—and it needs no effort on our part to tell to what extent it exists in the rural districts of our enlightened land,—refused to receive any explanation of this circumstance which tended to place it among the ordinary events of every-day life. That the figure was the figure of some one who had once loved Emmy, when living, and who came thus to offer this tribute of his grief and affection over her remains, they were ready to allow; but then no persuasion could induce them to believe that it was a living lover: and as it was pretty well known that the little beauty had fretted herself to death, it required small ingenuity to add to the tale, that she had done so in consequence of the previous decease of her lover, who thus came to acknowledge her constancy in his immaterial shape.

And certainly the caprice of the lover has much

encouraged this view of the matter. Every year at the same time, on the first night that the May moon asserts her undisputed reign, the same figure may be seen at Emmy's grave, and in the morning the wreath of mignonette is there to testify to its presence. This has been so for seven years; and during that month of May, the children and the young maidens all shun the churchyard by night, till the morning tells them, by disclosing to view the now well-known wreath, that for this year the ghost has paid his visit.

And yet many might explain the fact. Gertrude and Christina both understand it. Old Melton knew of it before his death. The station-master at Bart could throw light upon the matter, by telling how every May, when the weather is settled, and there is a moon by night, a gentleman is put down by the last evening train, who generally returns by the up night mail; how, when the weather deceives him, he will wait days and days in seclusion at the little inn at Bart, till the wished-for night arrives.

Yes! Herbert never misses this duty; and as he stands above the remains of her who was the dearest thing to him in life, he, too, thinks he beholds through the haze, or even in the clearness of the light when no haze is there, the dim outline of her presence, always ready to welcome the expiation of his one slight inconstancy.

What, if this be the result of a distempered imagination, or of a mind always, perhaps, at such times fevered by a violent, ever-recurring grief? What, if it be only a phantasy,—that belief, that he sees the pale wistful face, the dark speaking eyes, the small

upper lip, the upturned countenance, as on the night when the moon was rising over Holme wood, the harbinger of hope and happiness to them both? May it not, nevertheless, be true that her presence is there near him, though not in the form or shape she bore on earth? And not only on these occasions, but always?

And if it be really so, as the human mind is apt to both picture and hope,—and surely there can be no harm in the belief that the spirits of the dead do attend the footsteps of those whom they have loved on earth, to watch and guard them from harm,—is not Herbert happy in his guardian? What can teach him patience better, than the knowledge of her resigned and gentle company? What courage, than the remembrance of her faultless life of duty? What self-sacrifice, than the thought which her never-withdrawn presence must bring, that in pursuing it her heart broke.

Work on him for good, gentle flower, now departed, as thou wouldst have done when alive! Let thy memory and thy presence urge him to holy deeds, pure faith, never-failing hope and resignation, and let the love which would have been a joy to him hadst thou lived, be a comfort and example to him, though now left behind.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORN-MARKET, OXFORD.

ERRATUM.

Vol. II. page 35, line 16,

For Bella Prudden *read* Bella Dillwyn.